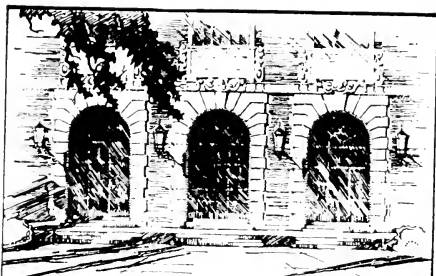


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JOHN OF ENGLAND.

AN HISTORICAL ROMANCE.

BY HENRY CURLING,

AUTHOR OF

“THE SOLDIER OF FORTUNE.”

Now powers from home, and discontents at home,
Meet in one line; and vast confusion waits
(As doth a raven on a sick fallen beast),
The imminent decay of wrested pomp.
Now happy he whose cloak and cincture can
Hold out this tempest.
A thousand businesses are brief in hand,
And heaven itself doth frown upon the land.

KING JOHN.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LONDON:

RICHARD BENTLEY, NEW BURLINGTON STREET.

1846.

LONDON:
Printed by Schulze and Co., 13, Poland Street.

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JOHN OF ENGLAND.

CHAPTER I.

THANET IN THE REIGN OF JOHN.

The posts come tiring on,
And not a man of them brings other news
Than they have learned of me.

SHAKSPERE.

Every minute now
Should be the father of some stratagem.
The times are wild,—contention, like a horse
Full of high feeding, madly hath broke loose,
And bears down all before him.

IBID.

It is our purpose to commence the present
tale in and around a portion of merrie England,
which we conceive to be a familiar spot to the

majority of our readers—the pleasant fields and white-faced shores of the fertile Isle of Thanet.

There is, indeed, we opine, no portion of our “sceptered isle” which to the lover of English History, or to the antiquarian, possesses greater interest than this spot. Here Saxon and Dane, Briton and Roman, have alike encountered, “face to face, and bloody point to point;” and not a foot of its verdant surface, but must again and again have been bruised with the hoofs of hostile paces, from the Roman invasion down to the times of the York and Lancastrian dissensions and civil butcheries.

Gazing from the yellow sands upon that pale, that white-faced shore,

“Whose foot spurns back the ocean’s roaring tides,
And coops from other lands her islanders,”

the spectator becomes peculiarly impressed with the deeds of other days—he feels, indeed, that as the waves, “those curly-headed monsters,” roar and break at his feet, whilst the sea-bird screams aloft the flood, and the furious blast

sweeps o'er the dizzy height; such must have been the exact scene, when the watch-fires of the Britons burned upon the wold, and the galleys of Cæsar first appeared in sight.

No remembrance of young England here interferes with the reverie of the wanderer; but lost in dreams of early and shadowy recollection, as the eye traverses the beachy margin of the ocean, and rests upon the sea-built towers of the monastic Reculvers in the distance, he becomes lost in dreams.

For our own part, we must indeed confess to a considerable share of affection towards a portion of our island, which in the stirring periods of the early history of Britain has played so important a part, and we shall therefore make no apology for bringing our actors upon the scene, in the close vicinity of the well-known, lively town of Margate.

In the good old times—

“All times when old are good,”

—and we purpose to go so far back as the reign of “English John”—this town (at present so

large and flourishing) exhibited a very different appearance to that which it now displays.

During the turbulent and troublous reign of John, Margate, together with many other towns upon the shores of Thanet, was indeed but a "*mere gate*:" a miserable looking sea-built hamlet or fishing village, having a watch-tower erected upon the part now designated as the fort—a sort of beacon containing a barrel of pitch in readiness to blaze intelligence of the hostile sail, or peradventure serve as a landmark during rough weather. The veritable sea-gate situate in a gap of the cliff, from which the place derives its name, and which frowning portcullis-like in the chalky height, was a sort of coast-guard substitute to hinder rogues and pirates from coming up into the country, on this side the island, to rob and plunder its inhabitants.

In place, indeed, of the handsome dwellings of the present day, in which so many visitors spend their summer vacation, the reader must imagine a squalid collection of huts.

It was in the immediate vicinity of this town that, on the opening of our story, a spectacle might be seen, that for some reason or the other which has never yet been satisfactorily urged, is never again to be witnessed in England. It was a hawking party. They came on attended by all those “appliances and means” of which the good Lady Berners has so amply and learnedly discoursed—whose book, by the way, we commend to the best attention of our readers. The principal personage of this gallant cavalcade, who rode in front, was a man of some fifty years of age. A moment’s glance would have sufficed to convince the spectator that he was no common person. His frame was large and powerful, his bearing majestic, and his countenance noble; and he sate his horse as one who had been more accustomed to the thunder of the captains and the shouting, than to the idle sports of the field or the chase. Sir Gilbert Daundelyonne, for such was his name, was accompanied on either hand by

a youth and a young lady, his son and daughter. There was nothing that may be termed noticeable in the person of the youth; but his eye must indeed have been dim, or his heart unimpressible, who could have looked unmoved upon the face of Bertha Daundelyonne.

It was not long after they had commenced the sport, when a tumult was heard from the adjacent town. Scenes of violence and uproar were not uncommon in that age, when municipal authorities, although they were strict to punish, were lax to restrain; but the times were critical, and the present hubbub seemed to engage the attention of the knight, but not sufficiently so to divert him from his pastime.

Dashing past the monastic building of Salmstone, the party presented a noble and stirring picture to the gazer's view. Suddenly, however, as Sir Gilbert Daundelyonne drew up his party and reclaimed his hawk, after a successful flight, a heavily-armed horseman, clad in com-

plete steel, appeared in the distance, upon the Canterbury road. The furious pace at which he rode proclaimed the import of his errand:—

“ He seeme l in coming, to devour the way,”

and as he drew bridle before the party, and sat like a pillar of iron upon his reeking horse, he presented a sealed packet to the knight's hands. The radiant Bertha Daundelyonne meanwhile took the opportunity of exchanging a few words with the young esquire, a youth of about eighteen years of age, who sumptuously caparisoned in furred tunic and plumed cap, occupied his saddle as if it were his familiar seat.

The arrival of the armed horseman effectually spoiled the sport of the hawking party; and after perusal of the contents of the packet, the Knight of Daundelyonne hastily dismissed his attendants, and commending the stranger to the care and hospitality of his son and daughter, desired them instantly to return to his castle.

As the lady and her brother, accompanied by the messenger, moved off with their train, the knight beckoned his esquire to his side, and held brief converse with him on the subject of the letter he had received.

“ Clinton,” said he, “ I find here that war is proclaimed, somewhat on the sudden, with France ; nay, so tardy hath been the coming of all news to our island, that the King, with his power, has already set forth, and is advancing towards this part of the coast. My instructions meantime take me towards Dover with all the speed I can make, as the Cinque Ports must be looked to immediately, though we ourselves should lack men for our own towers. Make, therefore, good Clinton, for the town yonder without delay ; draw together what retainers of our own you can readily collect, put them under charge of the good knight, Geoffrey de Lacy, and despatch them to Sandwich with all speed.”

The young esquire, who cap in hand had listened to the instructions of the stately knight bending forward in his saddle, was about to

dash the spur in his horse's flanks, when the latter again addressed him.

"Yet stay, good Clinton," he continued, "I have here further powers from Hubert de Burgh, who comes on with the King. He bids me forthwith bring round from Dover to the Sandwich haven certain vessels now lying in the former port, in order to embark the war engines expected from the tower. To you I intrust this latter service. You will, therefore, join me at Dover after executing your present commission. Away, good youth, the spirit of the times must teach us haste."

The Daundelyonnes were a fierce and martial race. The present knight was a fine specimen of his order. The news of the coming strife had aroused all his ardour; he raised himself in his saddle—stretched forth his gauntleted hand, and reining in his steed, struck him fiercely with the spur, till he bounded into the air, then turning his horse's head towards the Sandwich flats, he was quickly out of sight, whilst his esquire with equal haste made for Margate.

Arrived there the thoughts of the youth were for the moment distracted from his mission by the revolting scene he beheld.

A belief in witchcraft was in that ignorant age so prevalent, that neither station nor sex was any bar to persecution, if once suspicion fastened itself upon the victim. In the present instance, a crooked hag, with age and poverty grown into a hoop, was being hurried along by the rude hands of an excited mob, together with a young girl, whose lovely features and form ought to have procured her at least some show of mercy. As the rider spurred amongst the throng, his eye caught this bright form in the clutch of ruffians. He reined in his horse, leaped from the saddle, and as a sort of constable, bearing upon his doublet the emblazoned badge of the Cinque Ports, and armed with a halbert, was dragging the girl along, he confronted him and bade him desist.

“How now, sirrah,” he said, “wherefore this brutal conduct towards one so young and innocent ; wouldst thou murder the poor child ? Unhand her, caitiff !” he continued, as

the man clutched his prisoner more firmly, and seemed inclined to question the right of his interference, "loosen your grasp upon her arm, or, by St. Paul, I'll drive my dagger in your teeth."

"She's a witch, my Lord," returned the man-at-arms; "trust not her cunning beauty. She has been condemned and tried; we've our orders from the head-borough to burn her, together with that limb of the devil coming on behind. There's a bonfire i' the Dane, but we're going first to put them to their purgation, and fling them into the Guestling; if they swim, good: they may get out an they can; if they sink, they're guilty, and we shall hook 'em out and burn 'em in yonder fire."

"Stand back, hounds," cried the young esquire, as the mob pressed upon him, "and do you, sirrah, release the girl, as I direct."

"Truly, your honour," said the constable, "if you say so, it must be done; but body o' me, she's a witch, I tell you, and if I release her now from custody, she'll be torn in pieces

by the mob. See, even now they grow impatient, and if we get not on with the work in hand, we shall all suffer."

The mob, indeed, then ever eager for scenes of blood, but who had been stayed by respect for the esquire of a Daundelyonne, now showed symptoms of executing summary vengeance upon their victim. The old hag, who had, in fact, been quite at their mercy during the foregoing discussion, was almost past praying for, and had atoned for all the cattle she had murrained, and the people she had cramped. The youth saw he should scarcely be able to save the girl, whose beauty had made an impression upon him, unless he bestirred himself in earnest.

Drawing his hunting-blade from its sheath, in an instant he cleared a space around him, and as the burly constable also stepped back before his glittering steel and fierce eye, he caught the girl up in his arms, and placing her upon the pommel of the saddle, sprang lightly upon his steed; then upsetting the constable with the shoulder of the animal, he dashed like a thunder-

bolt through the press, making for the spot where we have before seen his party engaged in the sport of hawking.

As the youth rapidly quitted the town with his lovely burthen, who from ill usage and fear was almost in a fainting state, he gazed with wonder upon her matchless beauty, and drawing bridle beside the monastic towers of Salmstone, the circling walls of which building are still to be seen in this part of the island, he alighted and gently set her upon her feet.

For the first time since he had obeyed the impulse of humanity, and rescued her from death—as he still continued to gaze upon a form, which for grace and loveliness seemed unequalled by any thing he had ever before seen—he began to recollect the mission he had been entrusted with by the good knight he served—the coming of the King's power, and the consequent haste he was ordered to make towards Dover—and as these thoughts pressed upon him, consideration for the helpless state of one so lovely, and what he was himself to do with

the new charge with which he had thus encumbered himself, also began to trouble his mind.

The young esquire, although brave as the steel he wore, was a youth of a gentle disposition, somewhat different from the haughty, overbearing, and turbulent spirits of the young nobles of his day ; and as the maiden gazed upon his handsome features and answered his queries, he felt more and more interested in her helpless condition.

“ I have neither friend nor protector,” she said, “ but the woman they have just killed—no home, but the hut I dare no more return to. Oh ! do not desert me, or you will have released me from the present danger only to abandon me to a worse fate.”

The youth hesitated ; he was perplexed in the extreme ; he knew not what to do. A devil seemed to whisper strange thoughts into his ear, when suddenly the swell of the choir in Salmstone chapel sounded from the building. It seemed a holy monitor to warn him from evil.

“ Ha !” he said, “ I will give you shelter

here ; you shall take sanctuary till I return. Yonder fat monk, whom I see approaching, will summon hither the harbinger of the grange ; in her charge I can safely leave you."

" And your name ?" said the maiden, looking tearfully in his face, " I have never before experienced so much kindness ; let me hear the name of one so noble-looking and good, that I may set it in my prayers."

As the youth gazed upon the lovely girl, he resigned her to the female harbinger of Salmstone, with strict charge to tend her well till his return, and applying the spur to his steed, once more galloped into the town.

" I pray you," said the maiden, as she lingered at the gate, " who is yonder good youth ?"

" Trouble not yourself about him," said the withered nun, as she drew her in and closed the portal, " such rencontres are dangerous and require *aves* and *credos* to obliterate them. The Lord of Folkstone and Goulstone is nevertheless a good youth : he is esquire to Sir Gilbert Daundelyonne, one who hath kissed the blessed tomb, and fought the holy war in Palestine under

Richard of England. But soldiers are not for such maidens as we to think of; they are mighty pretty to look at, but like their own weapons, unsafe to meddle with. I have learnt to forget soldiers for many long years; so must you."

CHAPTER II.

THE COMING WAR.

Ha! majesty! how high thy glory towers,
When the rich blood of kings is set on fire.
O! now doth death line his dead chaps with steel,
The swords of soldiers are his teeth, his fangs,
And now he feasts, mouthing the flesh of men,
In undetermined difference of kings.

SHAKSPERE.

God shall mend my soul,
You'll make a mutiny among my guests.

IBID.

THE period in which we have introduced some of the dramatis personæ of our story upon the scene, was that portion of John's reign, in which Philip the Fair, of France, espousing the cause of the nephew of the English monarch, laid claim in his behalf to the crown of England, together with the

territories of Ireland, Poitiers, Anjou, Touraine, and Maine, bidding the haughty, vindictive, and unscrupulous John to lay aside the sword :—

“ That swayed usurpingly these several titles,
And put the same into young Arthur’s hand.”

It was this somewhat inconsiderate and unweighing demand of the French King, which had caused the sudden rumour of war we have already seen to have reached, by an armed post, the interior of the Isle of Thanet.

The English power was, indeed, on this occasion, “ like lightning in the eyes of France ;” for almost ere the defiance of John had reached the French court, the interruption of his churlish drums, sounding in the vasty fields of France, awoke endeavour for defence. The haughty embassy of Philip had chafed the fierce Norman’s blood ; and to the threat of war held out, in case John refused to allow the title of Arthur of Bretagne, he carried his own answer, backed by thrice fifteen thousand hearts of England’s breed.

It was upon this occasion that John first gave evidence of a spirit and a resolution—a boldness and a celerity which at intervals he displayed in after-life ; and which, by reminding the English people of his brother Richard, attached them to his rule. Unfortunately for the man, his passions were stronger than his judgment, and his pleasures were held in greater immediate account than his present reputation or future fame ; otherwise there was stuff in him out of which a greater man even than the hero of the lion-heart might have been formed. It is impossible to doubt or to deny that, in addition to his own sins, the sins of his kindred,—as was afterwards the case with Charles I.—were visited upon him. Direct lineal descent was not so much insisted upon in that age, but the people could not forget that the son of his elder brother Geoffrey existed, and that the monarch to whom they paid homage was an usurper. They now remembered the inhuman manner in which the three brothers, Geoffrey, Richard, and their present King, had rebelled

against their father, the great Henry II., a remembrance which had lain dormant whilst Richard occupied the throne, whose social qualities, whose courtesy, and above all, whose bravery, which was indeed heroic, endeared him to his countrymen.

During the reign of Richard, the land had slept with a sense of comparative security. Although he had reigned ten years, hardly twelve months of which were passed in his native country, such was the *prestige* of his name, that, spite of the tyranny of Longchamp and the regency of John, England was, to use a common phrase, "well to do." There was that feeling in the breast of every Englishman, which Shakspeare has so well expressed from the mouth of one of our characters, the heroic Faulconbridge :

" — nought shall make us rue,
If England to itself do rest but true."

Now, however, in the reign of John, a different epoch had arrived. All was gloomy fore-

boding and threatened insecurity throughout the land. Access even to the stronghold of the barons was not easy, except for occasional tournaments and short revels. Ladies, even of the higher ranks, in that unsafe time, were almost as much confined by the care of fathers, as in the East by the jealousy of husbands. The young knight could but rarely steal a glance at the damsel of his own age, and hence women were regarded with a devotional admiration unknown in modern times.

The news of the coming war, meanwhile, spread like wildfire through the Isle of Thanet. Although communication between town and town was both difficult and dangerous, such was its import to the shores of Thanet, that it flew from mouth to mouth like the fiery cross of later days. The palmer, with his cockled hat and staff, carried it to the monastery and hamlet as he wended his painful way—the minstrel sang it in the baronial hall—the mendicant coupled it with his petition for alms, and, as post after post came tiring on, furnished with

fresh tidings to the different families of importance in the island, men gaped and rubbed their elbows with the excitement of the expected commotion.

In Margate, indeed, and the adjacent sea-port towns, the news produced a quick sensation, and occupying the minds of the inhabitants, drove from their thoughts the popular excitement directed against the two persecuted individuals, when the Lord of Folkstone, so opportunely for the safety of one of them, appeared upon the scene.

The inhabitants of the different sea-built towns upon the shores of Thanet, had, indeed, reason to apprehend the breaking out of hostilities. It was no uncommon thing for the walled, ramparted, and well-manned Cinque Ports to be ever and anon pounced upon by the falcon swoop of a hostile power, which, after a desperate encounter, left a hot and bleeding sacrifice to the fire-eyed maid of smoky war. But when the foe, under cover of night and negligence, caught an insecure town in their foray, the inhabitants

failing to escape, became the instant victims of brutality and wholesale murder.

The Isle of Thanet, in particular, had been a continual battle-field for many previous centuries; war swept over its surface like the fiery breath of a smoky furnace, and left behind a blackened and charred memento of its fury. Those fair fields on which the crops of the careful husbandman had at sunset waved upon the rich soil, in a few short hours, perhaps, reeked beneath the moon; and as the sea-breeze moaned o'er the umbered furrow, it was impregnated with the pungent effluvium of burnt stacks, huts, and scorched trees, whilst the bodies of the numerous inhabitants, who, dying in strife, had been hurled into the flames of their dwellings, smelt unwholesome in the fitful breeze.

Salmstone Grange, situate a little more than a stone's throw from the town of Margate, antique in appearance as it is in the present day, displayed in the reign of King John a very different aspect. The busy and reforming hands of the Cromwellians have destroyed its dark

monastic look, and given a touch of their own puritanism to its outward favour. Some traces of the old chapel, refectory, and dormitory are yet visible ; but the portions of the building now adapted to the purposes of a modern dwelling, have a decided semblance to the starched style of the prick-eared Round-heads of Cromwell's day.

At the period in which we resume the thread of our tale, Salmstone, although situate in a charming spot, and surrounded by emerald pasture and smiling down, had a dark, ominous, and melancholy look. Its walls were massive and frowning, speaking of monkish superstition, intolerance, and priestcraft. The solemn chaunt of the shaven monks might be heard from afar, chaunting the midnight mass, or singing the requiem for the dead. But, although all was outward austerity and professed sanctity, squalid fanaticism and dirty habiliments, the same dark passions, and the hatred of an enforced seclusion—the same human vices, errors, and evil desires prevailed under the cowl, scapula, and

frock of the lazy monks as may be found in these more enlightened times.

Salmstone was part of the ancient possessions of the abbot and convent of St. Augustine, at Canterbury, to the sacristy of which monastery it was appropriated, and in the days of the early Kings of England, the privilege had been granted to the Abbot of St. Augustine's of holding a fair within the manor.

The lands of Salmstone (as pertaining to this establishment) amounted to eighty-nine acres of arable land, so that the fat Abbot of St. Augustine had a valuable piece of church property in this rectory or grange. Many useful charities were, however, performed by the religious community of Salmstone. Each poor wayfarer could claim at least *one dish of dressed pease*, whilst the abbot was under obligation to deliver to the hamlets of St. Lawrence, St. Peter's, and Minster ten marks yearly, and sufficient man's meat and horse meat, on the feast of St. Mildred, St. Bartholomew, and half a dozen other saints' days beside.

When the fair girl, rescued by the young Lord of Folkstone from the fangs of an infuriated and savage mob, was admitted within the gates of Salmstone, the shrewd old nun turned upon her a scrutinizing and inquisitorial glance, and ere she led her into the harbinge of the building, proceeded to gratify a little harmless curiosity. The ancient dame, although now the bride of heaven, devoted to charitable deeds, and clad in coarse weeds and pinched wimple, had doubtless in early life played her part in the world as great a sinner as she now professed herself a saint. She was as much struck with the extraordinary beauty, both in face and form, of the young female thus suddenly left in her charge, as the introducer himself had been.

The girl was neither unbecomingly nor ill-clothed; on the contrary, she wore a short tunic over a gown of rather fantastic fashion, and scarlet hose and russet sandals were upon her legs and feet. Her hair, which was of the richest brown, now hanging in some disorder

over her shoulders, half covered her Juno-like form, whilst the lips—that never opened but to show the pearly teeth within—the faultless nose, dark eyes, cheek of cream, and almost regal forehead, altogether presented a picture of female excellence, which seen, “became a part of sight.”

The old nun, whose cloistered life had not altogether divested her of that envy which the aged and ugly feel towards the young and handsome, gazed with some little ill humour, mixed with surprise: “Hum,” she said, as she turned sharply upon the girl, after closing the gate, “the garb of a timbrel player and the brow of a Queen. I’m not sure I was right in admitting you here, young woman. Say, whence came ye, and why thus scampering over the island with the Esquire of a Daundelyonne, like some knight-errant with his leman tacked to his horse’s crupper? ’Twere best, I trow, to thrust ye from the door, in place of giving ye sanctuary at yonder youth’s request. This is a refuge for the destitute, a harbour of comfort

and repose for the sick and sorry, not a trysting place for the youthful and vain. There abide none here but the miserable, the world-sick, and the hopeless."

"The miserable have no medicine but hope," returned the girl, "I am destitute, friendless, and unhappy. All I crave is shelter from persecution for a brief space; deny it me, and I perish."

"Enough," said the nun. "A brief shelter I can grant ye. Follow, and you shall find it."

The harbinge of Salmstone consisted of a long range of single cells, and one large hall, for the accommodation and lodgment of pilgrims and wayfarers. This portion of the monastery stood somewhat behind the main building. When the young girl was introduced into the interior, she found herself in a gloomy stone-built, low-roofed, and arched apartment. A sort of dresser was in the midst. An ample fire blazed upon the hearth, and several mendicants, one or two wandering minstrels of the commoner sort, and a gaunt-looking pilgrim, were its tenants.

“Here,” said the nun, “you will find food and shelter. I am not permitted to grant a long stay to any except the sick. If, however, you choose to assist me in my duties, your task, like mine, will be to tend the traveller and administer to the wants of the feeble. In that case, I can afford you a few days’ shelter under this roof.”

As the young female, after thanking the old nun, seated herself upon a sort of settle beside the fire, and refreshed herself from the food placed before her, she became, unconsciously, the subject of considerable observation in the harbinge. “What is she?” passed from mouth to mouth in a whisper, and as several of the monks of the grange passed through the apartment, they stopped with surprise to gaze upon her form and features. Beauty provoketh thieves sooner than gold, it is said, and even beneath the dark roof of a convent, innocence, unprotected, may be endangered.

Fat old Father Eustace compared notes with brother John, whilst the meagre and hungry-

looking brother Gregory uttered an exclamation of surprise to portly Paul. "Holy Mother!" said little Peter, "but here's a vision of paradise come amongst our ugly brotherhood. Oh! for a painter, to make a drawing of the Virgin for our chapel. Who, and what can she be?"

"I'll tell you," said the jester of Daundelyonne Castle, who had been with the hawking party, and just at that moment entered the harbinger, "what she is in a trice, most reverend fathers and sanctimonious brothers—she's neither more nor less than the attendant of Old Mother Midnight, the conjurer, who has been over in Margate spelling fortunes till she got herself apprehended for witchcraft. The lass is some poor creature she stole in early youth from her parents. Best leave this place," he continued in a whisper, gliding close to her, "or you may chance to find yourself in durance vile. There's as much danger for one of your profession and beauty here, as amongst the rabble. A word to the wise. Salmstone hath strong

walls and deep dungeons The night-shriek hath been heard before now in the breeze around. You understand me? I say nothing; but if ever the fiend laughs at all, it must be at hypocrites. They are his faithful dupes; they serve him without wages, and submit to greater mortifications for his sake than the sincerest christian to get to heaven.' Now, my masters," he continued aloud, "I want a cup of your liquor to wet my cock's-comb, and then I'll tell you the news abroad this morning, ere I foot it towards Daundelyonne "

The monks looked at each other at the intelligence of the jester, and shook their pale bald heads.

"Witchcraft! quotha," said Father Peter, "body o' me, I feel quite queer. What a grace there is about her. She steps like a fawn upon the hill-side. Witchcraft!" said little Peter, telling his beads with amazing rapidity, "by'r lady, I think I shall be bewitched myself, ere long. I never saw such luxuriant locks even in a picture. St. Bride, St. Benedict, St. Rada-

gund, and St. Christopher be amongst us all ! I vow to our chapel six tapers, weighing three-fourths of a pound of wax each, to keep us clear of utter confusion in the convent.

“ I knew how it would be,” said the jester, finishing off his draught, “ the convent’s in a state of mutiny already, and the monks demented. There’s the great bell been tolling for mass for the last half-hour in the chapel, and not one of these bullet-headed staring idiots can hear it. A rope’s end, ye sinners, a rope’s end !” he shouted as he left the apartment, “ your backs will suffer for this, my masters all. Here comes the superior.”

CHAPTER III.

DAUNDELYONNE CASTLE IN THE REIGN OF
JOHN.

O worthy fool ! Motley's the only wear.
What fool is this ?
One that hath been a courtier
And says, if ladies be but young and fair
They have the gift to know it : and, in his brain,
Which is as dry as the remainder biscuit
After a voyage,—he hath strange places cramm'd
With observation, the which he vents
In mangled forms.—

SHAKSPERE.

THE ancient seat of Daundelyonne stood, in the year 1200, about half a mile from the sea-shore, and consisted of a strong keep with several flanking towers, a court-yard and a moat, the whole being encompassed by a massive wall.

The green mounds, however, which served to mark its very ruins are now hidden from view. A modern rick-yard pens the steer and sheep, where the court-yard often rang to the warriors' clanking stride, and on the site of the donjon-keep of the once proud family of Daundelyonne, stands a modern farm-house. Nay, many a race since theirs has died out and been forgotten upon the spot which once owned them as Lords; which witnessed all the pomp and circumstance of their feudal pride—saw the musterings and gatherings of their men-at-arms—and heard the war-cry upon the battlements of their own towers.

The ancestor of Sir Gilbert Daundelyonne, we have mentioned in this veritable story, had helped Duke William with his good sword at Hastings, and received a grant of the estate for his services on that memorable day.

The family of Sir Gilbert consisted at this period of a son and a daughter, his wife having died some years before. During the preceding reign, the two children had been left pretty much to their own guidance. Sir Gilbert,

himself, then absent in the Holy Land with Richard the First, had entrusted his family and domains to the care of his younger brother, Marcellus Daundelyonne, who was Abbot of St. Augustine's, at Canterbury. The churchman, however, had rather neglected this sacred charge, insomuch that, saving and excepting his having despatched a portly priest to superintend the education of his nephew and niece, and paid periodical visits to them himself when he visited the different chapels, hermitages, and monasteries in Thanet, he never troubled himself about Daundelyonne. The children, therefore, had been early taught to consider themselves as beyond all control. They had been cradled in the luxury and splendour of a feudal chieftain's halls, and had learned to consider themselves as a sort of petty princes in the land.

The superintendence of the Abbot of St. Augustine over the establishment was just sufficient to keep the inferior officers in a state of discipline, and the offspring of his brother from being perchance clapped in their own dun-

geons or poniarded in their chamber in the dead of the night. He appointed them instructors in all the accomplishments of the period, and then left them pretty much to their own inclinations as to the prosecution of their studies.

Bertha Daundelyonne could embroider a scarf, and even work the tapestry and hangings of a room ; she could also dance a couranto, spell her missal, and was well versed in the romantic lore and minstrelsy of the time. She could fly a hawk, too, and back a courser with any cavalier in Kent ; whilst Hugo, the son, was perfect in all the exercises of chivalry, had profited something from the tuition of the churchman whom Marcellus Daundelyonne had provided, and was, indeed, for that age, quite a clever youth. When Sir Gilbert, therefore, at the commencement of John's reign, wandered home to his seat in Thanet—after having left all his followers upon the plains of Asia, and hung up his shield and lance at the Holy Sepulchre, a shoeless, gaunt, and sunburnt pilgrim, purified from sin by the miseries he had endured, and the infidels he had slain, he found no very great reason to

be dissatisfied, at the first glance, with the administration of those he had left in charge of his estate and family during his absence.

The knight of Daundelyonne was, indeed, a man of a somewhat different disposition from many of the Norman nobles then exercising sway throughout the kingdom. He was, it is true, haughty and overbearing in style and manner with his equals, and even unbending and stern towards his superiors in rank, but to his dependents and inferiors his disposition was sweet as summer. His family pride was enormous. He considered a Daundelyonne as fit company for an emperor; and, although in comparison to the possessions of the Salisburys, the Warwicks, the Norfolks, and the Pembrokes of that reign, his domain and tower in Kent were but a franklin's farm, he imagined that his name alone was an infinite thing in the balance, and outweighed the broad acres and battlements of many a *parvenu* baron, whose title had never been heard of before Hastings was won.

Bertha Daundelyonne partook of all her

father's pride. She was the haughtiest damsel not only in Kent, but in all England to boot. Unmatched in beauty, scarcely nineteen years of age, her name was already celebrated by the deeds of the bravest of every Court in Christendom. Knights wore her colours in the tournament, the revel and the ball, wherever balls, revels and tournaments were held, and this too without her ever having been a hundred miles from her father's towers. Nay, such was the fame of her excelling beauty, that many a champion who had never beheld her, recollecting that a knight without a mistress is as incomplete as a tree without leaves or fruit, from her reputation alone, had sworn himself her devoted slave, and had died transfixed in the lists, obstinately maintaining Bertha Daundelyonne, with his expiring breath, peerless throughout the world.

Daundelyonne Castle was principally built of bricks and flints in rows. Its walls massive and strong, were battlemented and loop-holed. Over the main entrance, which has been considerably altered since John's reign, may yet

be observed the family arms, in which the lion's head with teeth displayed, bears a conspicuous place.

On the right side of the first gate is a smaller entrance for common purposes, and at its right corner is carved a blank escutcheon, whilst on the left hand is a demi-lion rampant, with a scroll issuing from his mouth, whereon is carved the family name of which the bearers were so proud, "**Daundelyonne**;" a name, which shouted in the raging field, had oftentimes carried as much terror to the foeman's heart, as if the veritable beast of prey, from which it was derived, had shown his fangs in the *mélée*.

On the evening of the day following the events we have before narrated, the banner of the Daundelyonnes fluttered from tower and turret in the furious blast. The gates were carefully closed in the absence of Sir Gilbert, and a jealous watch was kept both sea and landward; each stranger and wayfarer was put to his answer, and although messengers and chance-visitors were constantly arriving and craving

entrance, none were admitted save those having business with, or belonging to the household.

In the large Gothic hall of the keep, hung around with flags, shields, weapons, armour, and trophies of the chase, the principal inhabitants of the castle were assembled at the evening meal. A large wood fire sent forth a ruddy glow from the hearth; the curling smoke from the logs ascending a huge cavernous chimney, in whose capacious maw the blast piped loud and drear to the aching ear, whilst several large hounds lay dreaming of the chase upon the rushes strown over the pavement before the blazing hearth.

During the temporary absence of Sir Gilbert, who was now hourly expected, his son Hugo presided at a table which was separated from the common board, and stood upon a raised dais at the upper end of the hall: his sister Bertha occupied a seat behind him, whilst on either hand was seated a portly monk, the chaplain of the castle, and the messenger who had been dispatched by King John, the day before from

London—one Walter Mauluc an esquire of Poitou, who afterwards obtained a dreadful notoriety from his participation in the murder of the young Duke of Brittany, and who was at that time (although a mere adventurer in England, with nothing but his sword and unscrupulous conscience to recommend him), making rapid strides in the good graces of John. Like most foreigners, the manners of Walter Mauluc were somewhat forward, and at the present moment he was doing his endeavour to make himself agreeable by his attentions (carefully tendered towards one so proud,) to the peerless and haughty Bertha; an attention he was the more able to insinuate, as the young Hugo was rather in a *distrain* and angry mood, and the huge churchman was so much engaged in the constant exercise of his jaws upon the large masses of meat he put between them, together with the capacious draughts he swallowed, that although he was all eyes and teeth, nearly choking in his efforts every five minutes of the repast, he could bestow no attention upon anything but the viands before him.

The young heir of Daundelyonne, on the contrary, ate fast and talked faster, rating the majordomo, chiding the inferior domestics, smiting at the hounds, which pawed him for savoury morsels, and every moment inquiring for the jester, who had been absent a whole day and night from the castle.

“Now, by the sky that hangs above,” said Hugo, “that scurvy bantering knave shall taste the whip for this. I marvel much, Sir Priest, you cram yourself so fast,—look to the churchman, there, and hand him wine, or he chokes. Sir Mauluc, I pledge you in a bumper; and may the hours be short till we breathe our coursers in the flowery fields of Brittany.”

“The royal preparation of the warlike John makes some stir,” returned the esquire.—“Already, I should think, one division of his power must have reached Rochester.”

“Good,” returned Hugo. “To-night Sir Gilbert returns; to-morrow, we shall put on towards Dover. See to the monk there, some of ye; he sickens again. Holy Mother! how these friars eat. Ho! there;—hath any

one seen the varlet Gondibert? None. I thought so. Let a man-at-arms mount and scour the island for him. By my halidom, he's always now either sotting amongst the lazy brotherhood of Salmstone, or gossiping with the landlord of the 'Chequers,' at Monkton. Away! I say, scour the county, and bring him in, dead or alive."

"He saves your labour," said the jester, entering at that moment in company with a youthful page, whose features were half hidden in the hood of his doublet.—"We are bounden to you, Sir," he added; "but the thong and our hide are divorced. Your father ne'er applied it; neither dare his son."

The jester of Daundelyonne was indeed a privileged person; he was a great favourite with the old knight, and using his folly like a stalking-horse, generally spoke harsh truths to the household, for which none cared to reprove him.

"Thou hast been regaling thyself with thy gossips at Monkton, Sir knave," said Hugo, "whilst we have been shut up here according

to order. There's news abroad ; what say they with whom thou hast talked ?”

“ Truly,” said the jester, helping himself and handing a trencher to his youthful companion, as he invited him to a seat on the stone bench beneath the cavernous chimney, “ these be stirring times ; and stirring times make great men. I'll get me a sword of lath, and follow these wars. There'll soon be more casques than heads, I trow. Ahem ! I find myself important here.”

“ What say those men with whom thou hast talked, sirrah ?” inquired Hugo.

“ Your worship is to know, there are *four* classes of men in the world :—*First*, those whom every one would wish to talk *to*, and whom every body does talk *of* ; these are that small minority that constitute *the great*.”

“ And what,” inquired Mauluc, “ does that class say, most material, Sir ?”

“ You will grant me your pardon, Sir,” returned the jester, “ I have not yet seen one of that class to-day. The *second* class,” he con-

tinued, " consists of those whom no one wishes to talk *to*, and whom no one does talk *of*; these are that vast majority constituting *the little*. Laugh at yourself, Sir priest, you'll find the subject inexhaustible. The *third* class is made up of those whom every body talks *of*, but nobody talks *to*; these constitute *the knaves*. More grace to ye, Sir Mauluc. I drink to your worship."

" I return your pledge," said the esquire.

" The *fourth* class is composed," continued the jester, " of those whom every body talks *to*, but whom nobody talks *of*, and these constitute *the fools*."

" But I marvel at our all sitting here so long over our flagons," he said, rising from his seat, " when from the battlements may be viewed the royal vessels now passing these shores for the Sandwich haven, laden, as report says, with the war-engines from the Tower of London. I saw them myself as I came hitherward, a glorious convoy, tossing like huge floating castles on the deep; their bellying sails gaudy with the arms of England, and their decks bristling with

weapons, shields, and the dancing bannerets of the knights and nobles on board. Ha ! away with you," he said, as many rushed from the hall to see the convoy passing, "make haste. There's the Queen Mother and all her train, the Lady Blanche of Spain, and half the unsettled humours of the land. There'll be more helmets than heads soon, as I said. And now, fair lady," he continued, approaching Bertha, (who except the majordomo, the gorged priest, and some men-at-arms, were all that remained in the hall). "I crave your Ladyship's favour and protection for this youthful page. Kneel, Sir Ganymede, and kiss the lady's hand."

The page then threw back his hood and knelt, whilst the Lady Bertha looked with some little surprise at a countenance which for regularity and beauty surpassed even her own exquisite face.

"Who, and what is he, Gondibert?" she inquired, as she gazed with favour on the figure kneeling at her feet.

"Inquire not, Madam," said the jester, "but rest content with my recommendation. He is

vowed to secrecy ; but you will find him both useful and faithful, and as we are all bound for France, such an attendant is necessary."

" Rise," said the Lady Bertha, extending her hand for the page to kiss, " I entertain you for my follower. Hark !" she continued, as the faint blast of a horn was heard without, " My father—I know his trumpet."

The next minute, the massive door at the lower end of the hall swung open. " Daundelyonne !" was shouted by the sentinel on duty, and Sir Gilbert, accompanied by the Lord of Folkstone and half a dozen knights, armed in complete steel, clattered into the apartment.

CHAPTER IV.

THE PAGE OF DAUNDELYONNE.

They shall yet belie thy happy years
That say thou art a man. Diana's lip
Is not more smooth and rubrous : thy small pipe
Is as the maiden's organ, shrill and sound,
And all is semblative a woman's part.

SHAKSPERE.

Are you a comedian ?

No, my profound heart : and yet by the very fangs of
malice, I swear, I am not that I play.

IBID.

THE young Lord of Folkstone and Goulstone, and Bertha Daundelyonne had been long engaged to wed. They had been contracted in early youth. The father of the young esquire, whose domains were ample, had died at the siege of Acre. He was, indeed, one of the first to mount the breach, where he was seen in the

clear light of the Greek fire, hemmed in and almost alone among the Infidels, numbers of whom he slew ere he himself was overthrown. Sir Gilbert Daundelyonne had sprung to his aid, brought him off in his arms, and received his dying request that the youth, his son, might have the benefit of his care and education in arms. Hence it was that the young Lord of Folkstone and Goulstone, at this time only eighteen years of age, rode as the esquire of a Daundelyonne.

Although, however, the Lady Bertha and Lord Folkstone, both of whom as we have seen were favoured by nature and fortune, were thus early contracted, strange to say, love came not between them. They were both eminently handsome, well-born, and rich. The very lands of the Daundelyonnes and Folkstones joined.

The mother of the young esquire—who was as anxious for the match as Sir Gilbert himself—resided in her son's castle of Goulstone, near Ashe. She had taken great pains to paint her son's virtues to Bertha in the most favourable light, and had also recommended the beautiful

girl to the consideration of the young heir ; and yet, whether it was that the betrothment, “standing thus upon the choice of friends,” was distasteful to the youthful pair, or that it arose from a difference of disposition, certain it was that their love “chosen by another’s eye,” seemed not to grow to any height between them.

The night on which Sir Gilbert arrived at the castle was one of great preparation at Daundelyonne. Orders were issued for an immediate march at early dawn towards Sandwich, to embark for Calais ; the whole of his retinue and men-at-arms, except such few as he thought sufficient for the garrison of his tower, being ordered on the expedition. The force he intended for France was entirely cavalry ; the bow and bill-men remaining at home.

On the evening of Sir Gilbert’s return, whilst all was preparation for the march at dawn, the lady Bertha sat in her chamber, the window of which looked towards the sea, and whilst her women were arranging and preparing for her departure, she was wholly taken up in listening to, and admiring her young page.

The youth whose beauty and elegance seemed to make a greater impression on her the more she regarded him, appeared as accomplished as he was handsome. He played and sang like a troubadour: his conversation was the most amusing and edifying she had ever listened to; and having in his chequered life wandered in many foreign lands, he not only spoke several languages, but described the manners and customs of the countries he had visited with peculiar facility. At one moment he danced like the Spaniard; at the next, he touched the cittern to a lay of the Italian. The lady Bertha, enraptured with what she saw, could indeed have said with Florizel, whilst she listened to his eloquent talk:—

“ When you speak,
I’d have you do so ever; when you sing,
I’d have you buy and sell so; so give alms,
Pray so; and for the ordering your affairs,
To sing them too: when you do dance, I wish you
A wave o’ the sea, that you might ever do
Nothing but that.

“ Such your doings
So singular in each particular,
Crown what you are doing in the present deed,
That all your acts are princes.”

In short, the haughty Bertha, she who seemed to scorn all mankind, and who had received the devoted loyalty of the chivalrous and noble, without even the smile of appreciation, was hopelessly and irrecoverably in love with a page, a young varlet whom her father's jester had picked up in his wanderings, and was, perhaps, notwithstanding the elegance of his figure, and his noble carriage, nothing but the follower of some gipsy timbrel camp, whom they had probably stolen from a hovel in their wanderings through the world.

“ O love ! how perfect is thy mystic art ! ”

The sun had sunk to rest, and the stormy winds of a gusty day had hardly subsided, when Bertha, her maidens having gathered behind her chair, sat beside the window which looked over the pleasure of the castle towards the sea, listening to the minstrelsy of her new page, whilst in the court-yard of the building still sounded the busy hammer of preparation, and the mingled voices of those who were mustering men, examining horses, fitting on armour, and

making ready trunk-mails and other furniture. Meanwhile, the subsiding wind sounded amongst the tall yew trees of the pleasaunce in a sort of dreary whisper, as the last tones of the page's cittern echoed through the apartments which Bertha inhabited. The page had just finished an English ditty which had especially charmed the lady; scarcely daring to breathe whilst the song lasted, lest she should lose a word, Bertha desired the page to recommence it. As he prepared to do so, there was a mischievous smile upon his features, whilst he gazed on the large blue eyes and half open mouths of the listening and admiring maidens. Some inward thought seemed to amuse his fancy, and he bent down his head and let the rich brown curls half hide his features, in order to conceal his growing merriment.

Presently, however, he raised his bright face, shook back his long curls, preluded upon his cittern, and once more lifting his voice, sang the following song with exquisite taste and feeling:—

Is hope a god
That never dies,
His blest abode
In trusting eyes,
Whose beauty time defies ?

Hope fell from Heaven ;
When from his home
Man first was driven,
Sadly to roam
Until his hour should come.

Alas ! can Hope
That to us clings,
For ever cope
With all the stings
That life around us flings ?

Or long repel
The busy fears
That paint too well
The coming years
Already dimmed with tears ?

Yes, fondly still,
Brighter than ever ;
Midst every ill
Nothing can sever
The light that leaves us never.

All I have loved
Lie in the grave ;
Still have I proved
How it can save,
Tho' heaven take all it gave.

The page ceased, and the listeners entranced by the melody continued to gaze with silence upon the performer. He himself appeared lost to the present moment, and as he stood with the instrument in his hand gazing vacantly upon the arras of the apartment, winters of memory appeared to pass over his soul.

The lady Bertha at length broke the silence.

“Your song,” she said, “is simple, fair youth ; but you have the trick of giving it exquisite effect by the manner in which you intonate the words. You spoke in it of loss of friends, of all you have loved. Can one so young have experienced misfortune so heavy ? What is your history ?”

“I know but little of it, lady,” said the page, “more than pertains to servitude and sorrow.”

“And your parents,” said the lady Bertha, “where dwelt they, and what was their calling ? Methinks,” she added aside to her favourite maiden, as she bent forward to catch the answer,

so gallant a figure can scarcely be of aught but noble birth."

"Of my parentage, lady," said the page, "I have no knowledge ; and amongst those with whom I have dwelt, I have not even dared to own my recollections of infancy. It has been industriously impressed upon my mind that all my relatives lie in the cold grave ; but in truth I have seldom ventured to make inquiry, as blows have been my only answer on such occasions. I yet retain, however, early and shadowy recollections of a life far different from that in which the greater part of my youth has been passed.

"I remember well the luxury and grandeur in which my childhood was cradled. And the tenderness of a mother's care, suddenly superseded by the frightful harshness of the rude and common barbarism, of vulgar manners, and treatment, has been branded into my memory. The blows which answered the terrified shrieks of an indulged child, upon finding itself transferred from tender care to rough usage, from heavenly

faces to demoniac and savage regard, can never be effaced."

"Poor lad ! thou hast been stolen in early youth," said Bertha.

"I doubt it not," said the page, sadly ; "and no sort of clue now remains, I fear, whereby to trace my parentage."

"What were those with whom you last dwelt," said Bertha, "and whom you suspect of so foul an act ?"

"A sort of Bohemian vagrants," said the page, "who traversed the country to attend on wakes and fairs, and play in the masques and revels of the castle courts of England and Normandy. By them from infancy I have been educated in the mysteries of their craft.

"Forbear, sirrah," said the jester, at that moment entering the apartment. "How now, mistress mine?" he continued, stepping up to Bertha. "Upon your promise of not sifting the history of this varlet, I gave him to your care. And you, Sir," he said, turning and again addressing the youth aside, "did I not

warn you that you were to be naught here? I snatched you from perdition but a couple of hours since; your own indiscretion was now about to lead both of us into a fearful scrape. An' the churchmen of Salmstone find they have been juggled out of a victim, ere we set the seas between us and Britain, you'll scarce escape their dungeons a second time, I promise ye. But I expected to have found the Lord of Folkstone here, lady," he continued, looking round the apartment; "hath he not been with you since his return? Sir Gilbert bade me seek him here."

"The Lord of Folkstone," said Bertha, haughtily, "hath not thought fit to turn his steps towards this wing of the castle, or even to exchange greeting with me since his return. Doubtless he conceives it unnecessary to pay even common attention to one towards whom he feels a sort of duty. The hoof-tread of his departing steed clattered in the court as I left the hall. Seek for him at Manstone Court, whispering a soft tale in Julia de Manstone's ear, ere he depart for France, and you will perchance find

him. I have little of his thoughts or company, I trow, at Daundelyonne."

The jester regarded her with a steady gaze for a brief space; he then turned his keen eye upon the youthful page who stood behind her, and smiled.

"Pride was the devil's fault," he muttered to himself; "but, methinks, of all the marvellous works of the Deity, there can be nothing more astonishing to the angels than a proud woman. Ahem—lady," he continued aloud, "I bear a message from your father. We start to-morrow ere the rising sun gild the sky. He desires, therefore, that you would seek early the refreshment of a few hours' repose."

"He shall be obeyed," said Bertha, preparing to dismiss her maidens. "Order a cup of wine to be served for this youth in my apartment. Ere I dismiss him, methinks I should like to hear another specimen of his skill."

The jester smiled, and took his leave, after bidding the lady good repose and pleasant dreams. But the lute of the page was heard to

reverberate through the apartments of the western wing of the castle long after the bustle of preparation had subsided in the hall below, and the iron-clad occupants who dozed over the embers on its hearth, had dropped off to slumber.

The Lord of Folkstone, meanwhile, although his presence had been much required at Daundelyonne, on remounting his steed galloped like the wind towards Salmstone Grange.

The adventure he was engaged in ere his departure for Dover, and the extraordinary beauty of the girl he had rescued, had made so startling an impression upon his imagination that, as if there had in reality been some sort of glamour or witchcraft in the matter, his mind was distraught until he could see her again. Stern duty had sent him post haste, as we have seen, towards Dover, but each bound of his horse as he crossed the flats on his road, appeared to remove him further from all he held dear. At length he drew bridle, turned his steed, and gazed back towards Salmstone.

“Strange,” he said, “that the form and features of that poor girl should thus haunt me ! A presentiment of some evil destiny seems wrought up with my thoughts. I would I had not committed her to the charge of yonder convent ! Pshaw !” he continued, as he again struck his horse with the spur, “it can scarce be love I feel towards one so lowly : that were indeed a simple folly.”

Thus thinking, the young esquire endeavoured to banish remembrance of the circumstance from his mind. He quickly gained the town of Stonar, and passing the ferry, crossed over to Sandwich, where he remained to bait his horse for a few minutes, and then pushed on towards Dover. It was, however, all in vain that he endeavoured to banish from his mind the features and form of the lovely girl ; and the moment he found himself released from the duty of attendance upon Sir Gilbert, he remounted his steed, and made for Salmstone Grange like the wind.

A short and rapid gallop brought the young esquire to the gate of Salmstone. The shades

of night had now descended, and the struggling light of the moon, as the fleeting clouds passed rapidly over her bright face, showed ever and anon in varied hue upon the flinty walls of the old monastic grange. At one moment, the dark building presented a sombre and melancholy look; its Gothic windows and low-arched entrances having a black and portentous appearance; at the next, as the bright moon suddenly broke forth, and silvered buttress and shafted oriel, tipping the fruit-tree tops which encroached over the orchard wall, and shedding a flood of light across the surrounding pastures, it looked a scene such as an artist loves to portray.

The youth leapt lightly from his steed, and seizing the porter's bell, rang it lustily, when an angry-looking and Bardolphic visage, full of knobs and tubercles consequent upon savoury pasties and deep potations, was quickly presented at the small opening flanking the gate, whilst at the same moment, several cloth-yard shafts appeared bristling from one or two arrow-slits conveniently placed on either side the gate-house.

“Hallo, there,” said the sulky porter of the grange, his voice sounding more harshly than was natural to it through the thickly walled and narrow embrasure. “Hallo, there, I say. Who disturbs the gate-house after hours? We admit none within the walls of Salmstone after curfew, unless by order of the superior, and he is absent at Canterbury;—God forgive me for telling such a lie.”

“Nevertheless, you will unbar your gates to me,” said the young esquire, “since I have matters of business to treat of, which must be instantly attended to.”

“Oh, oh!” said the wily porter; “think of that, my masters; here is a peremptory customer come to confession. Nevertheless gossip, you will name your business, and whence from, or you get no entrance at Salmstone; by the same token we have been molested and threatened with the grange being forced by a rascal mob from the town for the last day. Draw me your arrows to the ear, men,” he continued, taking his red face within the tower, and speaking to those above, “I see him now by the light

of the moon ; it's an armed horseman ; and unless he is prepared to give some account of himself, be ready to try the soundness of his chain-mail."

" Either admit me," returned the youth, " or give me speech of the harbinger of the grange. I come to make inquiry after one I left in charge here ; and woe to your own shaven crown, monk, if one hair of the head of her I seek be injured. Take my name and errand at once to your superior, and tell him the Lord of Folkstone craves admittance."

The porter upon this immediately withdrew to do the message, and quickly returning, instantly unbarred the iron-studded door and admitted the young esquire.

CHAPTER V.

THE SEARCH THROUGH THE GRANGE.

I tell thee, churlish priest,
A ministering angel shall my sister be
When thou liest howling.

SHAKSPERE.

“FATHER EUSTACE is at present in the chapel, my Lord,” said the porter somewhat more civilly, when he heard the youth’s name ; “the monks are at prayers ; but the superior bids me guide you to the parlour of the convent, where he will attend you in a few minutes.”

“Not so,” said the young noble ; “show me into the harbinge of the grange.”

“ Seek ye for a young girl who was committed to the charge of the harbinger some three days back ?” inquired the porter.

“ I do,” returned the other, “ I seek for the young woman I saved from the fury of a mob in the town.”

“ And who was condemned to die for witchcraft ?” inquired the porter.

“ Possibly so,” returned the esquire ; “ where is she ?”

“ Certainly not at Salmstone,” returned the porter doggedly. “ Heaven forbid she should be, since in the few hours she did us the favour of a sojourn within these walls, she well nigh bewitched the whole fraternity. Stripes, penance, and prayer have been the portion of the brotherhood ever since.”

“ Hound !” said the Lord of Folkstone, seizing the porter by the throat, “ thou hast not dared to offer further persecution to that fair affliction whom I left in sanctuary in this evil place ? Confess, villain ; what has become of the maiden, or by St. Radagund of Dover, I’ll pluck the intelligence from your throat.”

“Loosen your gripe, my Lord,” said the porter; “choking a poor devil is hardly the best means of coming at his secret. But, in sooth, I am unable altogether to satisfy your Lordship’s mind upon this subject. All I can tell you simply is, that whilst the maiden remained in our convent, the brotherhood could do little else but throw sheep’s eyes at her all day long whilst at mass, and praise her beauty whilst at meals. Father Philip and Father Paul got flustered whilst toasting her dark eyes, and Eustace and little Peter fell out and fought during matins. The superior, therefore, had her into his private apartment, in order to see with his own eyes whether she was the offspring of the evil one, or what she really was. Between ourselves, however,” whispered the porter, in a tremulous whisper, “there was, I know, a grave dug that night in the vault beneath the south aisle. The friars have been whipping and praying ever since, and there has been no more word of witch or warlock in the

convent. Besides, the harbinge has been scraped, and cleaned, and sprinkled, and purified, as if a herd of swine had been styed there."

The young esquire waited to hear no more ; he threw the porter from him, and threading his way along the stone passages, entered the chapel of the monastery.

The chapel of Salmstone may yet be viewed by the curious in antiquarian research, though its windows are now bricked up, and its vaulted roof half hidden by the piles of hay and straw with which it is filled. In fact, the time-honoured and venerable edifice now serves the purposes of a modern barn. Could the superstitious slaves and devotees of the palmy days of Rome have looked into the seeds of time, and beheld their shafted oriels thus clumsily filled up, their chapel desecrated, their secret dungeons laid bare, and the flanking walls ploughed over—nay, even the vaulted passages and apartments through which the solemn swell of their hallelujahs and hymns so sweetly

sounded, now made the dusty receptacle of the labouring implements of husbandry, the Saxon pillars and groined arches, half hidden with pea haums, and the grated windows stuffed up with sheaves of straw, perchance they might have begun to consider the efficacy of a cloistered life, shut out from all the pleasures of the world, when dust and "damned oblivion" thus hides their very tombs from the eye of man.

As the Lord of Folkstone entered the chapel, the monks were prostrated upon the cold flags, engaged in prayer; they had just received a severe homily from the superior.

For one moment the young esquire stooped his plumed head, crossed himself, and bent his knee to the crucifix at the extremity of the chapel. He then strode up to the superior, who was standing before the altar, and uncere- moniously interrupted the mass.

Father Eustatius, the superior of Salmstone, was no common personage. He was a true monk, and suited to the times in which he lived. Proud, vindictive, crafty, and jesuitical, he

stopped at nothing for the advancement of a religion he secretly laughed at, and no deed, however horrible, would have made him hesitate, had its perpetration stood between himself and the preferment he sought.

The Lord of Folkstone had some slight knowledge of his disposition and character, and therefore trembled for the fate of her he came to seek ; and as the monk turned in surprise, on hearing the clatter of an armed man in his chapel at that hour, he remarked the angry spot upon the youth's brow.

“ Sir priest,” said the young esquire, placing his gauntlet upon the monk's shoulder, “ I come hither to demand restitution of one I gave to sanctuary in your chapel.”

“ Of whom is it your pleasure to speak, my Lord ?” said the priest, affecting surprise. “ I know of no such person.”

“ I demand restitution of a youthful damsel, whom I myself brought hither, and delivered to your harbinger two days back ; and woe to you, monk, if by your villanous devices you have

harm'd her but in the estimation of a hair."

"From whom, my Lord," said the churchman, drawing himself up, "have you commission thus to take from the protection of the church, those who have sought its shelter?"

"Heed not thou that," said the youth, growing more angry, as he saw the disposition of the monk to prevaricate; "I come myself my own deputy, and here demand an account of one whose guardian I have constituted myself. Rumours of foul butcher-work here in your cells of iniquity, have reached me; and by yon heaven you do not serve, I swear, that unless dead or alive you account to me for the maiden I seek, I will search for her amongst the ruins of your infernal grange. Nay, attempt not to patter with me, priest, I know ye of old; neither shall it avail ye aught to bring your gate-house guard hither to oppose me. I will smite ye dead here upon your altar-stone, ere man can aid ye, unless you divulge to me the fate of her you wot of."

So saying, the bold noble grasped the monk

by the collar of his loose frock with a firm hand, as who should say, "you escape not from me, priest, without a full confession."

"How now, my Lord!" said the surprised ecclesiastic; "is this to be tolerated in the house of God, and are the ministers of heaven to be assaulted by violent hands at the very altar? Unhand me, Lord Folkstone; thou shalt rue this hour, wert thou backed—which I almost suspect—by John of England himself. Father Ambrose, call hither the convent guard; we are assailed by murderous hands, even in our very chapel here."

Upon this, the staring monks, who perhaps would not altogether have regretted seeing their stern superior get suffering penance and complete absolution on the spot, rushed from the chapel, whilst the enraged superior, thundering out the anathemas of the church against his persecutor, seized upon one of the candles from the altar, wherewith to perform the ceremony.

"Cease your mummary," said the young esquire, "and at once answer my queries. For your convent bow-men," he continued, unsheath-

ing his ponderous sword, as they entered the chapel, "they know better than to assail me. If they do so, I will unseam them from crown to waist-belt."

The young Lord of Folkstone was a dangerous spirit when once aroused. His blood was fairly up, and his handsome features, usually so placid and gentle-looking in repose, were now black and swollen with ire, a sure sign that blood would be likely to flow ere his anger was appeased.

The monk, whose iron heart knew no touch of fear, endeavoured to shake himself clear of his gripe, at the same time calling to the men-at-arms to seize upon the youth, or send a shaft through his brain, and a couple of stout fellows instantly rushed to the attack.

A Norman noble, however, clad in complete mail, was at that period no safe person to assail. Their blows fell upon his armour of proof with about as much effect as if they had been rained upon the hide of a rhinoceros; whilst he himself, forgetting the priest for a moment, dashed upon them, and cutting right and left with his

ponderous weapon, brought them down upon the pavement in an instant.

The monk was now convinced he could no longer prevaricate.

“Hold, Sir knight!” he said, as he looked upon his men-at-arms, “the days of Thomas à Becket have returned, I see. This deed of thine will demand a heavy retribution. Follow me to the vaults beneath the chapel, and I will conduct you myself in your search.”

While saying this, the superior took one of the lamps in his hand, and bidding Father Ambrose and the trembling porter follow, he led the way through the chapel, and entering a long narrow passage, descended to the apartments beneath the building.

The young Lord now found himself in a large vault arched in the Gothic style, and supported by massive pillars, down whose sides the damp moisture ran in cold and heavy drops, the moonbeams but just appearing through the small openings, which were grated at its extremity.

“I warn you,” said the monk; “you are

about to hold communion with one who hath dealings with the evil one. Enter the cell, and you will find her."

Had the young esquire done so, it is probable he would have seen the last glimpse of the moon on this side of the grave in the vault he was invited to enter, but he paused upon the threshold, as the monk threw open a massive door which, by a descent of some half dozen steps, led into a gloomy dungeon.

"Enter first, yourself, Sir priest," he said; "I am not to be trapped like a beaver in a hole. Proceed yourself into this pleasant refuge from the world's troubles. I follow close upon your heels."

The monk paused, and as the perspiration stood upon his brow, he seemed to shrink from the task.

"Take the porter with you, and go down," he said. "I cannot enter."

"Not so," returned the young esquire; "porters are plentiful as the monks they serve, and they are becoming so numerous, that they drive the very fairies from their moonlight revels."

The monk took the torch from the hands of the porter, and descending, followed by the young esquire, looked fearfully around the vault, when a dreadful sight presented itself. No living tenant was to be seen, but the horrid smell of a charnel-house pervaded the cell, and as the blue and faint light which, like the lightning of a summer's eve, streamed from one of the vaults above through the open door, it rested upon the shrivelled form and decaying fibres of a skeleton form stretched upon the floor at the extremity of the dungeon. The youth seized the lamp, and directed its rays upon the object before him. It was evidently the remains of a monk who had been immured in this cell and starved to death, for an empty pitcher stood by its side, and the jaws were firmly fixed upon the withering muscles of one arm.

The youth, after gazing for a few moments upon the mouldering remains, averted his eyes from the revolting spectacle.

“Wherefore,” he said, “show me this terrible record of your cruelty ? I see no living tenant

of this noisome tomb. The maiden I seek can never have shared so fearful a prison-house."

The monk, who had turned his gaze from the corner of the dungeon where the body lay, in affected or real surprise, looked around as if he expected to find that another had tenanted it.

"I swear to thee, Sir knight," he said, "I myself caused the female you seek to be consigned to this dungeon, after she had been fully convicted of sorcery in the convent and condemned by a secret conclave, which assembled in the vault adjoining, at midnight. We cannot, however, hold dominion over those whom the devil aids; she hath doubtless passed from our custody in company with the enemy of mankind."

"Liar!" said the youth; "to serve thine own sinful and evil purposes, thou hast put this poor creature to silence. This juggling porter, here, but now divulged your secret. The grave, villain!" he said, turning upon the serving-man; "get spade and mattock, and show me the

grave you spoke of. I leave not this sepulchre, till I have ransacked its vaults, and found, dead or alive, the person I seek."

"Holy Father," said the porter to Father Ambrose, "I know not really what to think of all this. This cunning pattern of nature's handicraft must have been a witch; how else could she have removed herself from yonder dungeon? This noble, too, is certainly possessed by her. I am not altogether given to much belief; but this passes all I ever heard of."

So saying, he followed into that part of the vaults situate beneath the south aisle, where the young Lord was already busied in assisting to raise a newly-buried coffin in order to convince himself that it either did, or did not contain the body of the female of whom he was in search. When, however, the coffin was raised, and its lid forced open by his order, it was found to hold the remains of a pilgrim who had taken shelter in the harbinger, and who having been suspected of dying of the plague, had been

buried with dreadful haste the night before.

It was in vain, indeed, that the young Esquire ransacked the entire grange, from vault to ceiling, and endeavoured by threats and promised bribes to elicit from the brotherhood and the retainers of the establishment some clue towards the fate of her he sought. Those whom the church claimed, either for good or evil, in the dark days of monkish intolerance and superstition, were seldom redeemed from her close grasp ; and like the secret dungeons of the Inquisition, the stone walls, and deep vaults of the monasteries,* have oftentimes revealed to after-times the unsuspected fate of many mourned for in their fathers' halls.

“ You shall answer this insult to holy Mother Church, to the Abbot of St. Augustine,” said the superior, as the youth prepared to mount his

* In Salmstone Grange, not long since, a niche was discovered in the thickness of the wall, containing the bones of some erring monk or nun who had been bricked up alive.

his steed and depart. You have outraged, in my person, the whole body of the clergy. Look to yourself, for the sword of Rome is terrible towards those who offend, and reaches far, aye, even to the hearts of Kings."

"And look you well to yourself, Sir priest," returned the youth, vaulting into his saddle, and shaking his gauntleted fist at the crowd of monks who stood in the gateway. "I bear this night's story to John of England; and but that French wars take me hence on the instant, I would return and fire this den of iniquity ere morning's dawn, though I, myself, were condemned to the stake for the act. King John already sees the corrupted lives of the clergy throughout the land, and hath thrown down the gauntlet to the pardon-monger of Rome. By my halidom, I expect on our return to hang you black gownsmen like rooks, in clusters, in your own belfries."

"Shoot him, men," cried the enraged monk to the men-at-arms, who were on the

tower, at the same time closing the gate, “drive a cloth-yard shaft through his hauberk to his heart.”

The youth laughed in scorn, as he turned his steed, and drove the spurs into his flanks—and as a couple of arrows rapped his armour, he dashed round the building, and vanished.

CHAPTER VI.

THE MUSTER OF THE KNIGHT'S TRAIN.

My ears have not yet drunk a hundred words
Of that tongue's utterance, yet I know the sound.

SHAKSPERE.

Fearful musters and prepared defence.

IBID.

It wanted, at least, two hours of dawn as the Lord of Folkstone approached the towers of Daundelyonne. The pale moon shed a silver light over the surrounding scene, such as Lorenzo describes, when he says,

“This night is but the daylight sick,”

whilst the grassy carpet of the open down immediately around the castle was decked with liquid pearl, which sparkled upon the emerald pasture like gems upon a fairy robe. It was, indeed, such a night as the poet's fancy would be likely to identify with the moonlight revels of Puck

and Oberon, and all their elfin court. The flag flapped heavily upon the keep of the castle, and to the bustle of preparation had succeeded the deep silence of repose.

“ The cricket sang, and man’s o’erlabour’d sense
Repaired itself to rest.”

The superstitions of the old age were at this period in full force. Men believed in witches and warlocks, fairies, and sheeted ghosts, as firmly as if such fantasies had been a portion of their religion. Such superstitions had their evils. The belief in witchcraft alone sent thousands of innocent females to the faggot; but the more innocent superstitions of the day had their charms. They hallowed the very turf, and gave each bosky bourn, shadowy grove, and unfrequented wood, an interest which the artificial conventionalities of duller and more matter-of-fact times fail to identify with all that remains of the sylvan retreats of our once park-like island.

The once popular belief in the existence of fairies, has long departed from the minds of the peasantry of England, and it would doubt-

less surprise many of our readers to learn how firm was the hold such belief took upon the inhabitants of the castles, halls, and cottages of the land. Yes, the cream-bowls which used to be skimmed, and the drowsy maidens who were oftentimes tormented by some household sprite, are now safe from persecution. The shining piece of money is now no longer found at early dawn, which had been bequeathed by the good-will of the pigmy of the night for shelter on the warm hearthstone.

Times are indeed changed. No longer do the elfins sip from the cowslip-bowl, haunt the moss-trees of the wood, or dance their ringlets to the whistling wind upon the midnight wold. Nay, the elfin rings we used to worship in childhood, are now subjected to the hypotheses of science, and the fairy creed of the immortal Shakspeare hath departed from his own island, and left us for ever.

The elf king and his queen, with all their company dancing by moonlight upon the flowery mead, was, however, a harmless belief in former days. No hall, chamber,

kitchen, or dairy ; no city, castle, or tower, no stable, or barn, but had its familiar elf, pixie, or hobgoblin.

“ More swift than lightning did they fly
About their airy welkin soon,
And in a minute’s space descry
What things were done beneath the moon.
By wells and rills, in meadows green,
They nightly danced their hey-dey guise,
And with their fairy king and queen
Chaunted their moonlight minstrelsies.
When larks ’gin sing,
Away they fling,
And babes new-born steal as they go ;
An elf instead
They leave in bed,
“ And wind out laughing, ho, ho, ho !”

As the youth reined in his steed beneath the tall trees which at that period, grew in a sort of clump, about a couple of bow-shots to the eastward of the castle, and gazed around, he felt the soft influence of the hour steal over him.

The night-breeze gently recommending itself to his senses, cooled his somewhat fevered blood ; and giving way to the melancholy which pervaded him, consequent upon his recent disap-

pointment, he alighted from his steed, and threw himself down under the shadow of the overhanging branches. Perhaps it may seem strange to some of our readers, that the young Lord of Folkstone should thus experience a violent passion for one whom he had only seen for a few short minutes, and that too under circumstances so peculiar. Certain it is, that even to himself, the melancholy he experienced on the occasion appeared somewhat extraordinary. There was, however, in this youth a conspicuous flash of the generous, disinterested chivalry of the old heroic times, entirely different from the sordid, calculating, and selfish character of our own mercenary age and system.

It must be taken into consideration also, that at this early period of John's reign, the minds of men were yet imbued with all those chivalrous feelings and ideas, it had been the peculiar delight of Richard Cœur de Lion to inculcate. The few writers of his day, and who were the delight of Europe, loved to represent in their romances a picture of chivalry, in which knights turned their spears upon preternatural

beings, or tremendous monsters, and these imaginary heroes of a past age, and perfect system of chivalry were believed to have really lived and had their being in olden times. Fiction then was confounded with truth, and at length it came to be thought that in the wilds and woods, and trackless forests of Europe were to be found the wandering redresser of wrong, the real errant, whose life was sworn to the cause of the oppressed. Some such feelings, indeed, were sought to be introduced by the old warriors of the time, towards the youth reared and educated in their households.

Amongst the iron-clad warriors who were so constantly engaged in public and private warfare, valour was the virtue which most commanded esteem and applause. Women also were taught to value the knight according to his skill and prowess in the listed or battle-field. The virtue of veracity, too, they professed to hold in like estimation: to lie was looked upon as a part of fear—the fear of speaking truth. Loyalty also was another point of honour, and

it grew the stronger in those times, from the habits of obedience in military service.

In the turbulent times which had succeeded Richard's reign, and during the insecure state of society, consequent upon the unscrupulous conduct of many of the more unprincipled of the Norman nobles, whose numerous fortresses were so plentifully scattered over the different counties of England, a few of the more generous and knightly of the land were led by inclination to taste the delight of employing valour for the protection of the feeble, against the spoiler. With them, young and beautiful damsels were admired for their attractions, and pitied and defended for their weakness.

As the young Lord of Folkstone looked around him upon the bladed grass, decked with liquid pearl, and silvered with the morn's rays, the fairy superstition of the age crept over him.

"Can it be possible," he said, "that the glamour of an evil spirit is upon me, and that I am under the spell of some pixie? The beauty of the girl has taken a strange hold upon my

fancy, and her probable fate has cast a gloom upon my spirits which it will take some time to dispel. I will combat the feeling," he continued, rising and mounting his steed. "In the solitude of my own chamber, I will examine into my own heart." So saying, the youth took his way to the Gate House, and sounding his bugle was admitted to the court-yard, where resigning his steed to one of the night-guard, he ascended the winding stairs of the flanking tower, which was his quarter.

Nothing, so powerfully calls home the mind as distress, real or imaginary. The soul retires within itself, sits pensive, and is susceptible of right impressions. If we have a friend, it is then we think of him—if a benefactor, at that moment all his kindnesses press upon our mind. Merciful Heaven! is it not for this that they who in their prosperity forget thee, do yet remember and return to thee in their hour of sorrow? When the heart is in heaviness, upon whom can we think but thee, who knowest every sigh and melancholy groan we utter!

The young Esquire knelt down before the

crucifix, which was erected against the stone walls of his turret chamber, and told his beads.

Yes, we have seen that he held no opinion of the iron bigots of monastic intolerance, and that in a good cause, he could even brave the thunders of the Vatican ; but he was yet a religious and virtuous youth, for the times in which he lived ; and having received comfort from his devotions, he arose, and throwing open the grated window, gazed upon the blue and moonlit deep in the distance.

As he did so, he heard the strings of an instrument which gave forth a short prelude, and then a voice soft and sweet as Apollo's lute, strung with his hair, warbled a verse or two of an old ditty. The song seemed to speak words of hope to his disappointed feelings ; its tones also appeared to bear some invisible and incomprehensible identity with her he sought.

Is hope a God
That never dies ;
His blest abode
In trusting eyes,
Whose beauty time defies ?

Yes, fondly still,
Brighter than ever,
Midst every ill,
Nothing can sever
The light that leaves us never.

The youth was surprised. The ditty sung by that voice seemed to bid him hope of discovering her he sought; such a voice had never before been heard within those walls. It must be some fairy, he thought.

“What, ho, there!” he said, leaning from the narrow window of the tower. “Who sings below at this hour?”

“A poor page,” returned the voice.

“In whose service?” said the Esquire.

“In the service of the Lady Bertha,” returned the other. “We awake her in order to prepare for departure at dawn;” so saying, the player again struck his instrument.

All thou hast loved,
Lies in the grave,
Still may you prove,
How hope can save,
Tho’ Heaven take all it gave.

As the first faint streaks of dawn began to lace the severing clouds in the east, the warder's horn sounded from one of the four square towers of the Gate House, and a wild flourish of martial music striking up in the court-yard, announced that the hour of preparation for departure had arrived. Accordingly, the hurry and bustle of the aroused inhabitants of the castle were quickly heard, and the exciting scene of a military party, preparing for the march, might have been viewed, together with all the circumstances of the gathering of a knightly train in those stirring times. Pages and horse-boys hurried hither and thither on their several quests and messages. Men-at-arms, demi-lances, custrels and grooms were to be seen in their buff jerkins, fitting on their arms and armour, leading out steeds, examining steel saddles, and other accoutrements and appointments, amidst the noise of direction, the going out, and the coming in of message and inquiry, incident to all the bustle of a military party, upon the move for foreign service. In the midst of which, immediately around the keep and offices of the main

building, might be observed serving-men, with the demi-lion upon their coats, hurrying along upon the no less important business of preparing for the morning meal. This was served in the great hall of the keep, where banner and pennon, and helmet, and blazoned shield, battered and torn, and speaking of other days, and similar gatherings from Palestine, hung aloft. Then loudly rang the trumpet call, and mustered the whole train in array for the march.

CHAPTER VII.

LONDON IN THE REIGN OF JOHN.

To the spital go,
And from the powdering tub of infamy
Fetch forth the lazar kite of Cressid's kind.

SHAKSPERE.

Think, when we talk of horses, that you see them
Printing their proud hoofs i' the receiving earth.

IBID.

Attest in little space, a million.

IBID.

THE Knight of Daundelyonne issuing from the great hall, whilst the Lady Bertha, his son Hugo and Walter Mauluc, successively mounted the steeds which were led up to the portal, proceeded to inspect the retinue and equipage of each man-at-arms, and glance over the whole train, ere he himself vaulted into the saddle.

He then beckoned to Walter Mauluc, who having placed himself beside the Lady Bertha, as his dark eye glanced over her matchless form, was pouring his high-flown compliments into her not unwilling ear.

“Our roads,” said the knight, addressing the esquire of Poiteau, “separate some half a mile hence: you will bear this sealed brief to the King, whose power you will be likely to fall in with between Sittingbourne and Canterbury. Commend me to him with all true duty:—meanwhile your packet informs him, that all things requisite have been arranged for a speedy embarkation. The Cinque Ports are on the alert, and all preparations for wafting his power across the sea goes on apace. Lord Folkstone,” he continued, taking his esquire apart, “you will accompany Mauluc, and join the King’s party. This packet is for Hubert de Burgh; it treats of matter of importance, and requires some tact in judging of its best time of delivery into his hands. Enough: we meet next on French ground: farewell.”

The knight, as Lord Folkstone and Mauluc

stooped their crests to the Lady Bertha, and galloped out of the court-yard, placed himself with his son Hugo and his daughter at the head of his party, and gave the word to pass from the castle.

The cavalcade then filing from the court-yard, passed the principal entrance. The dim mists of morning were just exhaling as the leading files of the cavalcade emerged from beneath those four square-built towers, from which the bowmen of the castle, who were part of the garrison left behind, looked down. The Gate House guard too, drawn up just within the court, lowered their partisans, and the trumpets rang out a martial flourish, whilst the men-at-arms and servitors, who formed the remaining portion of the reserved garrison, as the rear of the party left the gateway, crowded after their fellows, uttering their rude jests and regrets, as they bade them farewell.

“Adieu, comrade,” said the chief of the bowmen. “’Tis thy turn this time. Heaven speed thee in France. By’r Lady, but I should like to have sent a shaft amongst the frogs this

bout too, but we must stay here, whilst the brave game is playing, I trow."

"Grieve not thou, Diccon," returned the rider, "I lay my lance to thy bow-string, there'll be work enough anon for all hands, even here at home soon. There's a storm brewing, as the sailor says ; I hear it sing i' the wind already."

"Adieu, Lawrence," shouted another ; "commend me to dark-eyed Jacqueline of Calais, if she still lives."

"A most important commission," said the jester, at that moment riding up ; "here I pray thee, good Lawrence, take up this stirrup for me, good youth. Yonder knave of a groom is full of his ropery, and hath altered every particle of my horse-furniture in the hope I shall break my neck. Revenge is a debt, in the paying of which the greatest knave is honest and sincere, and so far as he's able, punctual. The villain remembers I had him punished for the last trick he played me."

"There's no pleasing a fool," said the groom sauntering up "I've had more trouble

with thy horse trappings this morning than I shall ever take again."

"Go to," retorted the jester, "he that can please nobody, is not so much to be pitied as he that nobody can please. God help thee! thou art but a sour crab at best."

"Adieu, Gondibert," said the steward, "we cannot afford to lose thee. Take care of thy cockscomb, and bring it back safe and sound. Keep thy bauble too unscathed. Methinks, the knight might have left thee behind to enliven our dull hours here in Kent, whilst he is at the wars."

"I must serve as a sort of dram," said the jester, "to keep up the courage of our party in adversity. The affair could not proceed unless I proceeded also. God prosper us in France! and keep you all in this blessed peace here at home, say I."

"Is that thy son, there, Gondibert?" inquired Maud, the warder's wife, as she stood in the small door-way within the gate-house. "Methinks, he keeps his face muffled up as if he suspected his parentage."

“Whose son is that you have put into old Hubert’s hands this moment,” replied the jester, “can’t tell me? For ’tis more than he can.”

We must now retrograde somewhat in our history, that we may look upon London at this period, and glance upon the royal army which the King had collected together with a celerity perfectly astonishing, and putting himself at its head, by rapid marches was now conducting through the pleasant county of Kent towards the coast, in order to embark and strike a blow in France, almost ere the news of his intent should have reached the court of Philip.

On the early dawn of the morning of the departure of the King and his power, the curious old streets of Lud’s Town presented the appearance of one vast garrison. Knights of high birth and military renown, who had bled in the Crusades, quitted their castles on the royal summons, bringing with them their men-at-arms of all descriptions, their

retainers, vassals, and esquires: the nobles of the land, the Earls of Warwick, Salisbury, Norfolk, Pembroke, and others, men whose names alone were like a trumpet blast in the field, had either arrived, or were continually coming in with all their trains. Bands of bowmen from the villages, hamlets, and towns of Yorkshire, Warwickshire, Nottinghamshire, and other parts of England, clad in their green doublets and hoods, had come in to swell the ranks of the infantry—those famous bowmen of England, who were trained from early youth at the butts erected in every township, the ancestors of that peasant infantry who were afterwards renowned in every fight from Cressy and Agincourt, and a hundred fields besides, up to Flodden.

All day long the army of John—and in early times there was by no means so much regularity in the march as in our own day,—the different leaders bringing on their powers according to their own judgment—continued to pour out of the city, division after division, and

party after party ; some even arriving from distant parts at one gate, and after a short halt marching out again at another. For many hours the bridge over which they passed to the Kentish side, a thoroughfare of dark, castellated houses and towers, was almost choked up with the iron forms of the stately horsemen, and the masses of infantry, which, moving under the numerous dark portals, seemed an endless train.

The streets of the city presented a curious contrast to what is now to be observed. War, at this period, was the business of life, and little show of other business was then to be observed in its crowded streets. The low-roofed houses of the citizens, and the narrow streets, here and there relieved by some dark monastic edifice, or strong built castellated mansion, spoke of little else but what pertained to deeds of broil and battle. The armoury of the inhabitants, when not on the back of the owner, was to be found hanging ready to the hand in each citizen's home ; whilst the low-roofed and dark apartments were secured from invasion by the

massive door, the iron bar, the grated window, and the strong bolt and heavy lock. In the narrow and squalid-looking courts and alleys, then, as now, redolent of filth, debauchery, and poverty, and which were situate in rear of the principal streets, their very atmosphere infected by pestilence, murder, and violence rife even in open daylight, a curious scene might have been viewed, as there the camp-followers, the cankers of the army, were preparing to follow, like slot-hounds, upon the trail of blood.

There might be seen a goodly specimen of the swell mob of early days; youths and females, the juvenile depraved, clad in scraps of finery and tattered garb, bringing out their wallets and preparing for the march; the swash-buckler bully, whose hands were red with murder, but who feared the sun; the coward, whose beard was like that of Hercules, but whose heart was white, left his skulking hole in some blind alley, composing the stews, in the company of lewd females and scoundrels, to gather what was scattered amongst the suttlers of the camp. Then, indeed, was to be seen in these pestilential courts

and blind alleys, all the bustle and excitement which had before been observable in the more important streets and thoroughfares. The army had marched, and like birds of ill-omen, as the shadows descended, the followers of the camp were pressing to follow on its track. They wound out of the styes and hovels—that degraded crowd—and bundling up their things, and strapping on their wallets, drunk with excitement and strong drink, they hurried out of the city in groups ere the gates were closed.

As the night settled down upon the city, might still have been heard the loud laugh, the shriek, and the deep-mouthed curse amidst the low vaults and cellars which, at that period, ran under the inferior streets like a honeycomb; hiding from the eye of daylight the refuse of the population; and holding in their cavernous womb the outlaw, the starving mendicant, and all whom the fangs of the law would have fastened upon. All night long, the brawl, the insane shout, and the drunken riot, consequent upon the excitement of the time, were heard

at intervals in this sink of misery and sin.

In a low vault, whose grated entrance was in a by-street, and under the dark walls of a monastic building, whose subterranean depths had been long unused, even as a place of sepulture, were assembled a motley company of outcasts, outlaws, thieves, and beggars, composing the scum of the crowded town. There might have been seen the gaunt and sun-burnt form of the common soldier, who had gone the Crusade in the former reign; and who in the Crusader's camp, upon the arid plains of Palestine, had been taught the vices which brought him low, disqualified him for the forest-home he had left, and made him what he was, a gambling, drunken villain, the associate of the ruffian and the cut-purse of the highway. There also were to be seen the swarthy Egyptian wanderer, the common robber, the lurker behind the buttress, whose trade was to smite the passenger from behind and in the dark; and every class and grade of villain whom the peculiar spirit of the time found in his calling.

Herding in the very vicinity of mouldering coffins, and in the centre of damp decay, hiding almost unsuspected beneath the cloisters of religious edifices, the forfeited life was partially spent amidst dicing, drinking, brawl, and sin. Grovelling deeper each hour, they sought the hell for which they seemed to have been created.

“If man can’t mount

He will descend ; he starves on the posses’t.”

“The pestilence catch thee,” said a swarthy-looking female, clad in the cast doublet of a man, which she wore over her filthy weeds, like some modern Jezebel of the camp in the present day. “The fiend curse thee !” she said to a sottish, melancholy-looking man, who sprawled his length upon a broken bench opposite her ; “thy craven heart then fails thee—thou wilt not follow the war this bout ?”

“I will not,” returned the ruffian, “or, at all events, I follow no lay which thou art upon. I’ve seen enough, and had enough of thee ; seek another companion. When I walk next, it will be in other company.”

“May the fiend curse me, then, if I drive not

this steel into the heart of her that companions thee, thou scald knave;" exclaimed the woman, rising, and unsheathing the long dagger she wore at her girdle. "An' thou part company with me who hast so long been faithful to thy miserable fortunes, I'll have thee to the executioner's thong with three words of confession, though I myself hang with thee on the same tree. You forget yourself! Who poison'd the good knight's goblet at the feast in Dover Castle? Who shed desolation over the hearth, and stole the infant heiress of the noble family of—"

"Enough—enough!" said the man, "urge me not. 'Tis of that I think. Credit me, I will no longer herd with a fool. Go to; I am weary with my journey, and would sleep."

"What means the brute?" said the female, "and what temper is this thou hast brought with thee from Kent?"

"I mean that thou hast marred as fair a fortune as ever stood before man," returned the ruffian. "Here is all our scheme, which we have taken years to bring to maturity, blown to atoms in a blast. Harkee! the female child whom

you and I stole, and whom we have so narrowly watched for our own advantage, hath escaped our clutches, together with the proofs which would have made us rich for ever."

"What mean ye?" said the female, "is she dead?"

"She is, for aught I can learn," returned the other. "The woman of Brabant, with whom she lived, hath suffered death, and her dwelling is burned to the ground. You would always persuade me to entrust that child to her entire care in our late wanderings; and now, during our absence after that business in Warwickshire, Mabel hath been at her old employment of fortune-telling. She has been burnt for a witch, I find, and the child is either dead or beyond our reach. Some Lord rescued her from the faggot, and she was delivered to the custody of a convent, within whose walls she has doubtless come to a bad end."

"All our scheme, then, is so far blown to air," said the female; "but I think not so badly. At all events, had I taken charge of the child, and brought it up under our own care, I know then

what would have come on't. So far we are but where we should have been. No, no ! we could have reaped but small benefit any how, had the girl been brought up entirely a vagabond. Under Mabel's care, she learned no harm, although she travelled so long with our camp."

"Well," said the other, "it's all up now ; we've had the spending of the spoil we grabbed with her, and there's an end. I am tired, and would sleep ; put aside the lamp, and keep silence for an hour, if you can. Perhaps I will take your counsel, and follow the footsteps of the expedition."

CHAPTER VIII.

THE MARCH OF THE ENGLISH POWER.

His marches are expedient to this town,
His forces strong, his soldiers confident.
With him along is come the Mother-Queen,
An Até, stirring him to blood and strife ;
With her, her niece, the Lady Blanche of Spain ;
With them a bastard of the King deceased ;
And all the unsettled humours of the land,
Rash, inconsiderate, fiery voluntaries,
With ladies' faces and fierce dragons' spleens.
In brief, a braver choice of dauntless spirits
Did never float upon the swelling tide,
To do offence and scathe in Christendom.

SHAKSPERE.

THE young Lord of Folkstone and his companion, whom we have seen despatched on an especial mission towards the advancing army of the King, kept onwards at a brisk pace for some miles. They passed the bare and open part of the country immediately on this side Sarr, pricked across the marshes, and entered the

thickly-wooded lands at that period between Sturry and Canterbury. They then drew bridle, and breathed their steeds by a quieter pace ere they neared the city. Both were mounted upon the large, strong-jointed horse in use at that period ; an animal whose breed has been entirely extinct for centuries, and is more unknown to the present generation of equestrians even than the mammoth of a former world. Of strength capable, with ease, of bearing the weight of the iron shell which formed its owner's defence, and the linked mail and arms of the ponderous rider ; the war steed of the Norman knight also possessed considerable speed and endurance for the road.

Passing through the town, they halted and baited their steeds at a pleasant hostelry which, at that time, stood upon the summit of a hill some three miles beyond the city beside the high road. In the immediate vicinity of this hostel, amongst the glades of the woodland in which it was situate, were to be seen a large concourse of the Kentish bowmen, who having

been summoned from the different hamlets around, bivouacked beneath the shadow of the stunted oaks which grew on either side the road, whilst they awaited the coming of the army in whose van it was their privilege to fight.

This was in itself a most stirring and beautiful sight, the detachment of archers being, at least, fifteen hundred strong; and as they reclined, or lounged about in groups at their trysting place, some refreshing themselves from their wallets, others mending or altering their weapons, and many practising with their bows at marks set upon the trees, the entire forest scene around seemed filled with these picturesque foresters.

The Kentish archers at this period were a splendid power. They were jealous of their reputation too, and—aware that no country in the world could produce such marksmen—their whole lives were passed in practising their craft. They carried shafts of a cloth yard in length, and few men of other countries could bend their bows. No armour was entirely proof against an

arrow well drawn by one of these bowmen, whose skill was so great that he could 'rap every rivet in a foeman's harness.' They were of larger limb than the men of most of the other counties in England, at that period, and celebrated for their fair and sunny locks, the bright red and white of their cheeks, and their high features. As specimens, indeed, of the peasantry, they were the most remarkably handsome race, perhaps, of any age. Many of the present detachment were clad in green frocks and hoods, but some wore a sort of leathern shirt, which, entirely without shape to the figure, was girded at the waist by a broad leathern belt.

The entire force seemed as if it had been picked from the *élite* of the different villages around. Not a man of middle height was to be seen, whilst every now and then a fellow of tremendous proportions was observable.

Kent was at this time proud of her bowmen, and, at the monarch's request, sent her best men into the field. Besides their bows, many of them carried short swords; whilst others, again, wore across their waist-belts, and at their backs,

a sort of brown bill, somewhat larger than what we may now see used by the hedger and ditcher, a ghastly weapon in the hands of these powerful men, and which, sharp as a razor, would cleave a skull, or shear through muscle and bone at a blow.

The surrounding scene, on either hand, was one of extreme beauty to the eye of the travellers; as, having baited their steeds, they led them forth, and prepared to mount. The thick woods, whose bright green tops were seen for miles and miles on the London side, looked in the clear morning sun a succession of fairy hillocks of the softest and most delicate verdure; and as the eye traversed the expanse, it seemed that all England was one mighty forest, unaltered by the axe of the woodman for countless ages, and amongst whose impenetrable verdure occasionally peeped forth the stone-built turrets of some frowning castle, the spire of the village church, or the tower of the monastery. To the rear, also, the living verdure of the tall trees seemed to approach, and almost to embosom the huge buildings, towers,

and steeples, which rose from amongst the low-roofed dwellings of Canterbury, whilst in front, the narrow line of the London road was to be traced, intersecting the foliage for miles in its descent.

As the travellers neared the village of Boughton, they became aware of the approach of John's power, for upon gaining the ridge commonly called the Quarry Hills, the straggling advance-guard were seen toiling up the ascent. They therefore halted upon Boughton Mount, and watering their steeds in the stream which rises near Langley Park, and flows into the Medway, they watched the army as it emerged from the coppice below and ascended the hill.

First came the infantry, various in equipment and arms, a dark, compact mass, steady in gait, unflinching in look. Many were clad in a sort of half armour, bearing on their shoulders weapons of tremendous appearance, fashioned like scythes, fixed at the end of massive poles ; amongst these were to be seen every sort of spear, pike, and halbert. Next marched some

hundreds of a more lightly armed body, wearing merely thick, quilted leathern doublets, armed with sharp spikes, sword, dagger, and target. After them came a sort of irregular cavalry of the commoner sort, completely armed; but their appointments, in place of being bright and showy, were dark, greasy-looking and sombre.

This division marched somewhat in front of the main army, and then came the knights and nobles of the land:

“ All furnished all in arms,
All plumed like estridges, that wing the wind.”

with their retainers, vassals, and men-at-arms, a gorgeous train,

“ Rash, inconsiderate, fiery voluntaries,
As ever floated on the swelling tide,
To do offence and scathe in Christendom,”

This was, indeed, the pomp and circumstance of glorious war. The very sight of the mail-clad knights, with their train, and the gonfalon borne behind them, sent a thrill through the gazer's frame. Pennon and banderole, and plume and crest, filled the ranks with bright colours,

whilst the sun's rays were glanced back from shield and spear and bright harness, for miles and miles.

The very drums of the King's body-guard, as they came on with their heavy, rolling beat, keeping time to the blast of the brazen trumpets and shrill fife, were hung with crimson velvet, and emblazoned with the royal arms. There rode the herald too, in his gorgeous tabard, with the pursuivants; and after him came the somewhat motley array of unscrupulous hirelings, the lances of the free companies. For,

“ Now all the youth of England were on fire,
And silken dalliance in the wardrobe lay.”

The gentry of the different counties sent forth their sons to the war.

“ The wealthy, curled darlings of the land,
They sold the pasture then to buy the horse.”

There rode from the knightly county of Warwickshire alone, a host of gallant youth whose names, now no longer on the muster-roll of the living, are yet to be seen amongst those fine old warrior-tombs in the ancient churches of the

villages and hamlets of that park-like county. The Murdakes were there, glittering in arms ; the Clintons of Coleshill, the Comptons of Wynyate, the Ashleys of Hill Morton, the Cantelupes of Snitfield, the Sheldons of Beoley, the Ferrers of Chartley, the Wolveys of Bude, the De Lawards, the Walshes, the Meredens, the Comptons of Compton Wynyate, the Wellesberns of Hastang, together with the Carbonels, the Blenkenaps, the Walshes, the Atwoods, the Mountferts, the Lounghes, the Archers, the Darbercourts, the Verduns, the Berkswells, and a hundred knightly trains besides.

The northern counties, too, sent forth their knights, and the stalwart champions of the west were there. Kent, also, sent forth her quota. There rode the Mottes of Lydde Court, the Curbspines of Ashe, the Crevequers of Sarr, the Loungevilles of Knolton, the Peytons, the Halfnods, the Kingleys, the Daubervilles, the Criols, &c., &c. Then came the heavy ordnance, the bombardæ, as they were at that period termed, a name which was given to the rude cannon of the time, from the great noise they

made. Their forms, as well as the engines and instruments used for managing, moving, and conducting them, being only such as the most obvious incidents suggested, or the rudest invention had dictated. They were most of them made of bars or pieces of iron, fitted together lengthwise, and hooped with iron, and were long beyond all proportion; heavy and clumsy, and in a great degree unmanageable; they could not be fired above three or four times in an action, or indeed discharged often without bursting. Nay, so great a time intervened between the charges and discharges of these unwieldy pieces, that in the interval the besieged frequently had leisure to repair their walls after the shock of the enormous stones some of them carried. In addition to their unwieldy forms, they bore the portentous names of the Falcon, the Aspick, the Dragon, the Lion, and the Wolf.

The King rode in the very centre of this knightly throng, surrounded by his body-guard, and immediately accompanied by the several nobles who held office in the kingdom. Fitz-Peter, Earl of Essex, the Chief-Justiciary of England; William Longsword, Earl of Salisbury;

Bigot, Earl of Norfolk, Mareshall ; the Earl of Pembroke ; his Chamberlain, Hubert de Burgh, and many other of the highest nobles of the land.* Those formed his immediate staff as he rode ; a sight alone such as all modern conceptions of the pomp and splendour of war must fail of picturing. All wore their coronets upon their helmets, together with their surcoats emblazoned with the several devices of their arms ; their fierce, grim countenances, displayed by the upraised visor, and bearded like the pard.

The King himself wore his crown surrounding his helm, and on his glittering surcoat was the lion of England. He appeared in high spirits, chatting familiarly to the nobles around him, and shewing by the tenor of his discourse the feelings uppermost in his mind ; namely, the strong and all-powerful resolution to avenge the insult he had just received from Philip of France, and strike terror into his foe like the lightning-flash.

Perhaps John was one of the most extraordinary anomalies that ever held the reins of power.

One moment he could be bold and determined as the chivalrous Cœur de Lion; the next, he was timid and infirm of purpose. He was at once mean, vacillating, headstrong; cruel and tyrannical, selfish and depraved; and yet on occasion, he could affect a show of kindness, display wisdom, and act the magnanimous monarch just when it was expected he was about to carry out the designs of the butcher and the executioner.

Those who looked upon him as he rode in the midst of his nobility, might have almost conceived all this at a glance. In countenance and figure he was no bad picture of an English King; there was something unendurable in the majesty of his countenance. The divinity that hedges a King was there; but they who watched closely might observe a villanous lour at times, and amidst his most joyous moments a sudden drop of the eye-lid, and a down look, as if some demon tugged at his breast, even amidst his jollity. His first sharp glance at a stranger was a blighting scowl, and it depended upon the cast of countenance presented to him, whether

that scowl would herald the ever-during sneer of confirmed hate, or resolve into the smile of welcome and apparent liking. He loved to be feared, but he also loved to be feared by the bold alone. Those who feared aught beside himself he despised; and he could sweep from his path the man he conceived in the way, even of a few acres of land, with as little compunction as he would brush a spider from his coat.

As the Lord of Folkstone stood entranced with the splendour of the sight before him, that iron army passed on with a rushing sound, as if a continued shower of steel hail was rattling down; and then, as the baggage and its guard, and the camp-followers came in sight, the overcharged heart, which had filled with rapid pulsation consequent upon the exciting scene, relieved itself by a deep sigh.

They gazed as the last glittering files of the knightly train became lost beneath the massive foliage under which the road wound after crossing the heath at this part, and then, as the deep boom of the drum was lost amidst the woods,

they turned their steeds and rode slowly after them.

“We cannot approach the King,” said Mauluc, “till he halt for the night, which will be at Sittingbourne: unless on matter of hasty import, it is not permitted to have speech with him on the march.”

CHAPTER VIII.

A CINQUE PORT IN THE OLDEN TIME.

The nature of our people,
Our cities, institutions, and the terms
For common justice.

SHAKSPERE.

The King doth wake to-night, and takes his rouse,
Keeps wassail, and the swaggering, up-spring reels.

IBID.

WE must now, in motion of no less celerity than that of thought, shift our scene to the Cinque Ports, which, performing during all occasions on which war raged upon our coasts, a most important part in the drama, at this moment presented a stirring scene. The Cinque Port towns during John's reign, and indeed during many subsequent reigns, were considered the safe-guard of the kingdom. Situate at those parts of the coast most assail-

able, some of them opposite the narrow seas adjoining the foe, they were, besides, the mark upon which the hatred of the French continually displayed itself, and, in return, the navy of the Cinque Ports, even at that early period, was a terrific scourge to the Frenchman's coast. The warlike inhabitants of these thick-walled towns were a sort of amphibious race, and their superiority as seamen, even at the period of our story, bore abundant witness to supremacy on the ocean.

The barons of the Cinque Ports, by their cities' charter, held rank amongst the nobility of the kingdom, and by virtue of the perilous services they continually performed, obtained advantages not enjoyed by the freemen of other towns. Their constant readiness for action, and the stout and warlike state of their vessels, rendered them worthy of being rewarded by especial privileges and honours, and, consequently, the Cinque Porters of former days were a peculiarly proud, martial, and somewhat primitive race.

In reality, the barons of the Cinque Ports

ranked above the knights. They were on an equal footing with the peers ; besides which, they had the privilege of walking in the coronations of our Kings and Queens, and carrying the canopy over their heads. To see a Cinque Port Baron of the middle ages walk down the streets of his own town, even on ordinary occasions, was quite a circumstance. In step and bearing, with his huge sword and shield at his back, and heavy chain mail, he was like the Spaniard of old, who quarrelled with the very notion of being obliged to tread upon the vulgar earth. But when the breath of war blew in their ears, the Cinque Porters were a sort of rude exaggeration of a man-of-war sailor of modern times ; all fire, rough determination, amphibious bearing, and rude valour. Cradled amidst the excitement of constant watch and ward, sack and siege, the inhabitants were uncouth and fierce in disposition, even for their own times.

The mayor of a Cinque Port town was also a tremendous functionary. His powers were extensive, and he carried death in his eye as he walked the thick-ribbed streets with his town-

guard, his serjeants-at-mace, his hog-beadles, his water-bailiffs, and the fell executioner in his train.

Not only had the Thanes, or Barons of the Cinque Ports, their peculiar privileges, but they also had their peculiar punishments, pains and penalties. They could not only hang, behead, draw and quarter criminals, but in the Cinque Port of Sandwich they had the more uncommon and barbarous usage of drowning offenders in a stream which ran at the Canterbury end of the town; a portion of ground likewise was marked out and set apart as a field of death, in which criminals were even frequently buried alive.

The greater part of John's power, on the night subsequent to the day we have beheld it on its march, lay in and around Sandwich, in whose haven had been brought up by the industrious inhabitants—with an alacrity which showed it was a labour they delighted in—the several crafts that were to embark the division of the army immediately commanded by the King.

Sandwich, on this occasion, bore little resem-

blance to the town we see at the present time. even ancient as it undoubtedly is. The streets that were in existence in John's reign are now entirely remodelled, their very names forgotten, and their directions unknown. The gate-houses, now ruinous and desolate as they appear, were then unbuilt, and in place of the red brick battlements of the one or two remaining, and which speak of an Elizabethan age, the gates, walls, dwellings and monastic buildings which then stood within the boundary of the old faced ramparts, were built of dark flints, massive with bastions, and ominous-looking as the times in which they existed.

At the period of our story, this dark, romantic-looking Cinque Port, with its battle-mented walls and venerable church, appeared one great garrison, choked up with troops, and choice-drawn cavaliers; whilst the surrounding villages of Ash, Wingham, Woodnesborough, and Eastry, presented a glorious appearance as, seated before the different hostels, and lounging beneath the tall trees which then

shadowed at intervals the streets of an English hamlet, laughed, chatted, and sang the jovial-hearted soldier of old, the stately knight, the youthful esquire, the wandering minstrel, and the merry-eyed lass who followed in the gallant train. Then rattled the dice-box, trolled the catch, and echoed

“The lightsome laugh at little jest.”

The period of our island history which we are now describing, we may safely affirm to be most peculiar in its annals. The thirteenth century, besides being famous for a reign commingled with chivalrous splendour, desperate deeds, and acts of horror and barbarity seldom surpassed, may be considered, also, as the period of a great intellectual advance throughout Europe.

The Benedictine monks, the first reformers of the Catholic clergy, had become rich, lazy, and voluptuous to a degree, giving great scandal to the community; whilst the Dominicans and Franciscans rising in their stead, renounced all separate and corporate property, and threw

themselves upon the charity of the benevolent for support.

These mendicant orders became more popular from a severe literal adherence to some texts of the Gospel, and their embracement of absolute poverty gained them the general ascendancy naturally yielded to a life of self-sacrifice.

The vernacular languages began to be cultivated, and a native literature to show its early blossoms—some poetical flowers beginning to bloom even in remote, distracted, and barbarous Scotland.

Religious chivalry, which had broken out in the Crusades, probably guarded Christendom from the fanatical ambition inculcated by the Mussulman religion. Festive chivalry, consisting of jousts, tilts, and tournaments—a mimic warfare fitted to amuse a military age—reminded men of their prowess, kept them in the constant exercise of arms, displayed the skill and magnificence of the knightly and the noble of the land, and even humanized their manners. The disputes between popes and temporal sovereigns during this reign, verged to-

wards extinction, when Innocent III., favoured by circumstances, had pushed the papal pretensions to their utmost, amongst the best consequences of which was, that men were taught the possibility of maintaining the civil rights of various classes without an unnecessary appeal to arms, and with some mixture of an appeal to law and reason. The principles to which popes and kings paid deference in their fierce debates were applied to the political privileges of the laity, and contributed to the successful issue of that renowned struggle known in history by the name of the Barons' Wars.

To these principles it is owing that John's reign, although he was, perhaps, the most contemptible of princes, is the most memorable portion of our earlier history. Ignorance began amidst the full scene of horrors to peep through the blanket of the night.

The Cinque Port town of Sandwich, we have already said, presented a singular appearance even for the period in which we are writing. The King himself was quartered in the castle,

a square massive building, with a flanking tower at each corner, and situate just without that part of the walls of the town which look towards Walmer. Except his own immediate attendants, and his chamberlain, Hubert de Burgh, it was the royal pleasure to be unattended by the numerous nobles accompanying the host. Here he gave audience, immediately on his arrival, to the Cinque Port barons, heard their report of matters connected with the embarkation of his power, the list of ships in immediate readiness for the division under his own eye, and received report of other matters appertaining.

All night long, the men-at-arms were crowded into the unwieldy-looking, embattled, floating castles, which constituted the ships of war of the period, and the huge bottoms were towed out, as vessel after vessel received its warlike freightage, till with morning's dawn, they appeared :

“ A city on the inconstant billows dancing.”

Meanwhile, after a slight refreshment, as the King intended to sleep that night in the castle,

and embark his own followers and a large concourse of knights with early dawn, he gave the more immediate superintendence of matters to Hubert de Burgh. Then, throwing off his surcoat with the arms of England, and stripping himself of all the ensigns of royalty, taking Walter Mauluc with him, and merely equipped as a common knight, he left the castle as the shadows of evening descended, and approached the town of Sandwich.

It was by no means an uncommon custom for John to masquerade in different disguises after this fashion ; but not—as in the case of the eastern monarch of the fairy tales—that he loved to see into the law's abuse, and the happiness of his people. John merely descended from his state that he might grovel in all the license of low society, and enjoy unrestrained the sight of common manners in the very gutters and kennels of his kingdom. He loved, too, to play the base and common spy upon his people ; to bring up the popular topics of the time, to sound the base-string of his own name, and find the answering chord in the unsuspecting replies

of his subjects. Making a detour across the greensward upon which the castle stood, towards the left, he approached the gate which admitted to the town from the Canterbury road.

“I will see this rare specimen of female excellence, Sir Squire,” he said, as they trod the greensward. “If she be indeed so exquisitely endowed, ’tis pity a Kentish boor should bear the palm. How call ye the man betrothed to her?”

“The Lord of Folkstone,” returned Mauluc; “he whom I introduced to your Highness at Canterbury.”

“Ha! say’st thou? A likely stripling, and well worth a lady’s eye. Thy suit, Sir Walter, with that swarthy visage of thine, is like to prove a cold one. Thou wilt be like to experience a rebuff, methinks, even though I myself recommend thy virtues, should the maiden have looked with an eye of favour upon the bright form of that youthful noble.”

“Marry, my Liege,” said Mauluc, “I think

not so lightly of my own powers. I will give the lout Folkstone the start he has gotten, and yet beat him easily. The tongue, my Lord, the tongue—round but a flattering tale in a fair lady's ear, she's thine for ever. With your Highness's recommendation, my life upon't, I win and wear the beauty, ere we return from these wars. Give me but leave to deal in this matter as I think best, and the affair is settled."

"Thou art over-confident, Sir Knave," said the King, "our English maidens are made of somewhat more obdurate stuff than your jades of Poitou. Beware the lion's tooth! The Daundelyonnes are of the fiercest and most fell in Britain. One word of thy suit whispered in Sir Gilbert's ear, and he'll scourge the peniless Poitevin with horse-girths through the camp. Bethink ye, too; this Bertha, besides being enamoured of the swain Folkstone, is a very Lucifer for pride."

"Pride, my Liege," said the esquire, "like an eagle, soars above the sky, but love can make the royal bird as tame as the lark that nestles

upon the ground. The lady loves not the Lord of Folkstone ; I have discovered that already. Her bosom is pierced by the blind god, but her love is more lowly than your highness would suspect."

"Nay, prythee," said John, "a truce to thy vanity ; it makes me sick. Dost mean to say that in two or three hours' conference thou hast made this miracle of beauty thy obedient slave—that she forgets her haughty bearing, and loves *thee* ?"

"Not so, my liege," replied the esquire, somewhat bitterly ; "that would have been but a small wonder to what is really the case. The lady loves one of meaner estate even than myself. She loves even her own domestic, a vagabond page of doubtful birth ; a varlet with nothing to recommend him but a cittern, a velvet pouch, a trim leg, and, I needs must say it, a most winning face and form as ever the eye of beauty glanced on."

"Ha ! say'st thou !" returned the King : "this must be looked to. But, enough ! at more leisure remind me of the affair ; at present I am

weary of the subject. Suffice it that your devotion to ourself shall not go unrewarded ; at advantage we will talk further upon the matter ; meanwhile, be wary, and drop all titles here, we are near the town."

"What name will your Greatness stoop to take to-night ?" said Mauluc.

"My Greatness will stoop to be a borrower from yourself, Sir Squire," said the King, "so take care what exploits you lead me into amongst these Cinque Porters, and call me by your own name."

As the King closed the visor of his helmet, they approached the town-gate.

The shadows were now thickening, and the mists which, at that period, arose from the oozy, spongy, reeky lands which surrounded the town, over the Thanet side of which the salt tide still at times flowed, enveloped the surrounding scene like a dense fog. The gates were already closed, though a large concourse of camp-followers, wandering minstrels, and several men-at-arms were congregated upon the green-sward on either hand. They constituted a portion who had been shut out from the town by the

authorities ; the Cinque Port regulations being strict in permitting as few vagabonds or doubtful characters as possible within their walls after sun-down.

“There seems some commotion here,” said the King, as he quietly sauntered towards the crowd assembled before the gate-house. “These locusts of the camp have been tasting the strong beer of the Barons and Burgesses of Sandwich. Slink quietly up, and note what passes ; we may, possibly, meet with an adventure.”

When the King and Mauluc had mingled amongst the throng, they found that considerable excitement was caused by a difference of opinion as to the right of one of the followers of the army, a sort of gipsy, to claim possession of a youth he asserted he had arrested in the town, and who, he affirmed, was a deserter from their tribe. The youth, who was clad in the habit of a page, was possessed of extraordinary beauty. He appeared in deep grief, and as he stood with his cittern at his back, he implored the one or two soldiers who stood around, to assist in delivering him from the

clutches of the man and woman who claimed him.

According to his own story, he had been seized by the rude hands of the ruffian who at present held him, while on a message from a lady he served to the Lord of Folkstone, and dragged without the walls.

“Will any one do me a message to the Lady Bertha Daundelyonne?” said the page. “She lives not fifty yards within the gates. Ha!” he continued, extricating himself from the clutches of the ruffian, as the King and Mauluc, their visors closed, came up to the spot. “Here are two noble knights who will hardly see a follower of the Daundelyonne injured. Protect me, gentlemen, from this man, and pass me through the gates, I implore.”

“Stand back, hound!” said the King, as the ruffian sprung upon the page to reclaim him. “Stand back, I tell thee, lest I stain my sword with thy gutter blood. Take from our legs the clinging lad, but beware how you spring upon our person after this fashion.”

The man stood back, awed he scarce knew

why ; but he still retained his grasp upon the arm of the page.

“ Your Highness,” whispered Mauluc, “ is forgetting your assumed character. This is something odd. ’Tis the youth of whom we were speaking, the Lady Bertha’s page, whom this fellow claims. Best take him from the caitiff’s custody ; ’twill be a good introduction to the presence of the lady.”

“ Be it so,” said the King. “ Release the boy,” he continued to the ruffian, “ and give him to my charge.”

“ I will cut his throat first,” said the camp-follower. “ Hear me, Sir Knight, and I’ll prove my right to claim him.”

The King, however, was unused to be gain-sayed ; he advanced to seize the page as the man, half mad with strong liquor and excitement, drew his dagger to strike, and the royal breast received the intended blow. The next moment, Mauluc had smote the ruffian to the earth with his iron gauntlet, and drawn his sword to finish him upon the ground.

“ Stay !” exclaimed the King, whose chain-

mail had preserved him scathless, " I am unhurt. Seize the fellow alive ; I would hear further from him concerning this lad. Deliver him for the night to the gate-house guard."

Upon this, the esquire stooped and fixed his iron gripe upon the ruffian's throat. The fellow struggled resolutely, but Mauluc dragged him from the ground, and beckoning to one or two of the men-at arms standing around, delivered him into their custody, whilst the King, accompanied by the page, summoned the gate to admit them within the town.

The gate-house porter, however, proved a dogged churl : to the King's summons he gave a flat denial. Placing his mouth to a small round opening in the flanking tower, he desired the parties to remove themselves from the vicinity of the gate-house, lest the sentinel on duty above sent a shaft through their surcoats.

" We admit none within the town," said the porter, " after sun-down, without a Baron's pass. The King has given especial orders, too, that you scum be driven back to Coulesbridge. He'll

hang up all the ragamuffins he finds with the army to-morrow morning."

"Gramercy!" said John, aside, "I shall suffer from my own order."

"Ah," said the porter, "we've cleansed the streets of rubbish more than once since sunset; but look to it. The patrol will be out in a few minutes, and scour the road for a couple of miles. Best make yourself absent, then, while you can."

"Who commands at this gate?" asked the King, "I would speak with him. Say one of the King's household wishes to pass into the town."

"Nay, that will hardly pass current," said the porter, "since the King himself hath issued the order for no one to pass either into or out of the town without a Cinque Port order. Nicholas Espilon commands here; best not disturb him, lest he give thee a taste of the gate-house dungeon beneath this tower. It's an ugly hole, as I can tell myself, by the same token I once passed a terrible night there for being drunk at my post."

“Show him this token,” said the King, taking a heavy ring from his finger, and handing it to the porter. “Tell him the owner stands without.”

Scarcely had the ring passed within the dark gate-house, when the voice of command was heard, accompanied by the sounds of bolts and chains. The huge gates were immediately thrown open, and the ponderous iron portcullis raised, whilst a dark iron line of men-at-arms ranged themselves on either side beneath the arch.

“Signify we would be nought here,” said the King to Mauluc ; “deliver the prisoner into custody, and follow with the page.”

The officer of the guard bent low as the King appeared beneath the arch ; he then sank on one knee, and presented the signet ring he had received, and the monarch passed on.

Guided by the page, they approached a large and gloomy-looking mansion, standing close upon the shore of the haven, in that part of the town now called Strand Street. At the present period, a curious building may even yet be

seen, erected upon the site of the old dwelling of which we speak. The outward fabric, at the present day, proclaims it of the times of the Tudors, and it has twice had the honour of lodging Henry VIII., and has often been the residence of good Queen Bess. At the period of our story, it was a dark, turretted building, whose buttresses were washed by the waters of the haven, and was the residence of the mayor, who this night kept wassail, and entertained many of the nobles in the town. The King himself had signified his intention of being at the civic feast, but, afterwards, conceiving his present whim, had altered his intent, and excused himself.

The Earls of Salisbury, Pembroke, and Norfolk, however, together with many of the knights and nobles, and several ladies of rank were present, together with Sir Gilbert Daundelyonne, his son, and the Lady Bertha, their followers being quartered in the house. The town was so completely filled with knights and nobles, their retainers, vassals, and men-at-arms, that the King and Mauluc had passed along its

streets unnoticed, and now mingled amongst the serving-men, who were hurrying hither and thither in all the bustle of the mayor's feast ; and entering the long, stone-built hall in which it was held, they stood for some minutes to observe the party.

We wish it were in our power to describe in full the Mayor of Sandwich and his hospitable hall in the twelfth century. Terstane Copeldyke was Mayor on this year, a decent specimen of a sea-built chief magistrate. He was a tall, stout, square-shouldered, sailor-looking warrior, long-armed, large-jointed, and splay-footed ;—his iron-grey hair, and enormous moustache curling upon either cheek giving him the appearance of a huge, woolly-headed, twisted-horned ram, as he sat at the head of his board. In manner he was blunt, bold, and hearty, even for the period in which he lived. A sailor of the middle ages, the King of the Cinque Ports, knowing little else but what pertained to the small portion of England immediately around that part of the county of Kent, and conceiving the Cinque Port of Sandwich the most important spot, not

only of all England, but of all the world beside.

By no means awed by the company of nobles at present honouring his festive board, any one of whom rode, even on ordinary occasions, with five hundred men at his back; he carried himself in a free and easy manner towards all; and treating them as if they had been a party of his own barons and burgesses met to celebrate some maritime affairs of the port, his conversation chiefly ran upon those events which had happened in preceding reigns, in his favourite town.

The guests saw this, and drew him out occasionally upon his favourite topic.

“ I know not that, Sir Earl,” he said, in answer to Lord Salisbury; “ but this I do maintain, that our Lugdenburghters* have no good reason to respect the French; on the contrary, we have ever given them sufficing reason to know that our hatred is deadly, and

* The ancient name of the Sandwich folks.

they in return have spoiled us whenever they could get opportunity. All Kent smoked for it with fire and sword, what time Swaine pounced upon us. Old Sandwich even then held her own, and beat off the Dane. Every three hundred and ten miles of land furnished forth one vessel for Etheldred. They rendezvoused here, and here we fought and overcame. Tush, man, we know what a night-shriek sounds like. A blackened hearth and a family butchered is no such rare sight to a Sandwich burgess.

“Gramercy,” said Salisbury, “we go to revenge injuries upon your town, Sir Mayor; we shall fire many a city by way of reprisal ere we return, I trust.”

“I trust so, too—those who do return,” said the Mayor. “By the mass, I would I were myself going with you. I’d smite hard; I hate a Frenchman as I detest the enemy of mankind. Hallo there, fill a cup all round: I drink to the fairest blossom in Kent, the Lady Bertha of Daundelyonne. Waes hael, fair lady, when I look on thy cheek of beauty, I am

mind of the fair maid I lost the night Stonor was burnt, and Sandwich sacked. The Frenchmen got the best of us that night. They took my all, burned my house, and slaughtered wife and children, ere I could get to the rescue. Ah!" he continued, setting his teeth, "we took the edge off our grief by the rough grindstone of revenge. For one wail in English, we caused ten in French. We crippled the whole fleet of France for that exploit."

"By the mass, a burly fellow," observed John to Mauluc, as they sat something apart at the very lower end of the board. "I'll grant these Cinque Porters the privileges they lay claim to. I see their value."

"More liquor here, you scald knaves," cried the mayor. "Drink, Sir knights; come, fill again. 'Fore Heaven, I love to look upon your inland faces, nobles. Methinks I should like, too, to shiver a lance with one or other ere you sail."

"Do you mark the Lady Bertha," whispered Mauluc. "Observe how the page glides behind her chair. What think ye, my liege, does she not come up to my description?"

“A radiant creature,” returned the monarch ;
“mine eye hath well examined her face and
form. But hark, what’s that specimen of sailor
importance talking of now ?”

“To the King, nobles,” said the Mayor,
rising three parts drunk and holding fast to
his huge oaken chair, “and success to his arms.
What though I’m a Saxon born myself, I care
not who knows it. Silence, ye fat-paunched
abbot,” turning to a churchman beside him.
“I’m not going to speak any treason now.
I’m a Saxon born, I say. The fiend’s curse
light upon the friar ; keep your devilish claws
from my gown. To the King, I say, albeit he
is not half so good a fellow as his brother
Richard. I never saw him till this day, when
I had audience of him on his arrival. Ah !
by saint Bede, but Richard was a rare specimen.
I remember his landing here after he escaped
from that beggarly Austrian duke. He landed
here—let me see—on the 20th day of March,
1194. Gods, what a man he looked ! I shall
recollect the gripe he gave my hand after
refreshing himself at this table, the longest day

I have to live. “ By my soul, but the present and the late king bear no sort of comparison. The curse light upon the friar: what ails thee,” continued the irate Mayor, twitching away his garment. “ Have I said which of the two I think worst of, fool?”

CHAPTER X.

A ROYAL SUITOR.

The king, my father, shall be made acquainted
Of this assault.

SHAKSPERE.

Mad world—mad kings—mad composition.

IBID.

King Henry—Give me any gage of thine, and I will wear it in my bonnet: then if ever thou darest acknowledge it, I will make it my quarrel.

Williams—Here's my glove; give me another of thine.

IBID.

MEANWHILE, the King passing behind the principal table (for, besides the one long board which reached from end to end of the hall, there were various smaller tables at which guests were seated), placed himself beside

Bertha Daundelyonne, and with all the freedom his high station gave him, began to address his conversation to her. At first, the lady bent a supercilious eye upon the helmed knight, and only slightly responded to his sallies, till something seemed to whisper to her that he must be of elevated rank, and she began to be interested in his somewhat assured conversation:—

“ I have heard of your surpassing beauty, lady,” he said ; “ but no description could come up to that which I now behold. That is true beauty which has not only a substance, but a spirit. Nevertheless, I am bounden to you for dispelling a portion of the scorn of your bright eye.”

The Lady Bertha was pleased with the flattery. “ Is it really your pleasure, Sir knight, to remain unknown?” she returned. “ I have already said, I care not to hold converse with one whose rank I know not. Lift your beaver that I may at least observe whether I have before seen a person who appears to know my name and lineage so well.”

“ I may not break the vow, beauteous Bertha,” he returned, “ which shuts me from mortal eye until the seas flow between myself and Britain. Suffice it, my rank entitles me to the honour of converse with one so well born and charming as Bertha Daundelyonne. Look upon my knight’s chain and spurs. Suffer me,” he said, taking her hand, “ to offer up the devotion of my lips upon this snowy offering.”

Royal favourites are often obliged to carry their complaisance somewhat farther than they relish. They live for their master’s pleasure, and they die for his convenience. Walter Mauluc, who had really conceived a violent passion for the person of the Lady Bertha Daundelyonne, as well as for her lands, began to repent of his folly in bringing the monarch so readily to her side. He saw the King was really struck with her beauty ; and at the present moment he burned with jealousy ; at the same time, he feared John’s impetuosity would lead him into a scrape, more especially as he saw that the haughty beauty was becoming offended with the freedom of the royal manners.

He, therefore, endeavoured to direct the King's attention from Bertha, by calling his observation to the conversation of the Cinque Port Mayor, who was now becoming rather flustered with flowing cups, and the excitement of speechifying upon the subject of his favourite town.

“ My paternal ancestor, my Lord,” said the stalwart chief magistrate to the Earl of Salisbury, “ was a bastard of Athelstan, governor of Kent. He fought the Danes both by sea and land, what time Eleacher had command here at Sandwich, taking nine ships, and destroying the rest of the fleet. That was in 852.”

“ It's an old saying,” said the jester, Gondibert, “ that truth lies in a well ; but the misfortune is, that some men will use no chain to draw her up, but that which is so long that it is the labour of a life to finish it. I wish I could trace my descent to some great man's bastard who fought his battles long time since ; I might then have been a mayor myself. As it is, I am but an ass at best.”

“ I tell ye,” said the Mayor, smiting his fist

upon the table with such force that all the goblets jingled, "that what I say is fact. I'll not be gainsayed, even by a fool. The next year, my Lord," he continued, "as our chronicles show, the Danes brought three hundred and fifty vessels against Sandwich. My ancestor did good suit and service on that occasion, and Ethelwulf gave him a grant of a hundred hides of land for his day's work. Nay, we have had stirring work here, I take it, ever since the flood."

"I don't believe one word of that," observed the incorrigible jester; "you go too far back by half, and get us all into the fogs of antiquity to bolster up your own grandeur, Master Mayor. The blessed sun of truth shines out to dispel the mist, and his rays hit a huckster's stall in Richborough town. Pshaw! my Lord," continued the jester aside, to the Earl of Salisbury, "I know this Cinque Port magistrate of old; his *pia mater* has a weak spot. His father was an honest blacksmith of the Roman town hard by here."

“ Our town claims especial privileges,” continued the Mayor, turning a deaf ear to the jester’s last sally, “ in virtue of the service we have always performed. The townsfolk beat off Unlufe, and even Swaine himself, with ninety-four ships, in 994. In 1006, our Cinque Porters destroyed the Danish fleet. Turkill Hemminge and Ailaph were also roughly handled here, in 1009.”*

“ A truce with your chronicled victories,” said the jester ; “ if you want a grant of privileges from my cousin John, ground the claims of your townsmen upon the loss of limb and feature, what time Canute slit off the hands, ears, and noses of the Sandwichers, when he landed in 1014.”†

“ Ay,” pursued another of the guests, “ or let him bethink himself of Hardicanute’s landing here in 1039, when he hung up the mayor by

* These events and dates are correct as to the history of this singular Cinque Port, which bore in early times the brunt of most of the invasions of our island.

§ Canute, in 1014, touched at Sandwich, where he sent ashore all the English hostages, after cutting off their hands, ears and noses.

the heels for holding out against him, and broiled his brain-pan at a slow fire. Ha! ha! that was a rare onslaught."

"Ask him if he has forgotten Earl Godwin's expedition in 1052," added Mauluc, "when he and Harold set all the barons and burgesses in the stocks, whilst they lived at free quarters, and entertained their sweethearts and wives in the town."

If it was the wish of his guests to irritate the somewhat irascible Cinque Port chief magistrate, they succeeded. His partial descent from the Saxons gave the Normans at his board not only a handle, but a desire to annoy him.

There is, indeed, hardly anything more remarkable in the manners and customs of the period, and immediately subsequent to the Norman Conquest, than the sovereign contempt in which the name of an Englishman was held. After the battle of Hastings, for several reigns, the native English sank into the greatest wretchedness. Their estates were confiscated, their persons insulted, and their wives and daughters dishonoured.

“The Normans,” says an ancient historian, “became mad with pride; nothing could restrain their insolence, cruelty, and rapacity. Ladies of the highest rank and greatest beauty who, by any mischance had lost their fathers, brothers, or protectors, were in danger of brutal treatment, violence, or even death from some of the more unscrupulous petty princes or barons of the land. Indeed, after the Conquest, the Normans reduced almost all the English to such a state of servitude that it was a reproach to be called an Englishman. This state of things continued nearly up to the end of John’s reign; though during the troubles of his career, through the instrumentality of one or two of the better and more virtuous of the nobles and knights, the condition of the poor English was in some measure ameliorated.

The Cinque Port Mayor turned from one to the other of his guests, twirled his long moustache, set himself back in his chair, and looked tremendous things, to the no small delight of all around.

“I may suffer, my masters all,” he said, “the

ribaldry of a licensed fool, even under my own roof, but by our cities' institutions, I'll resent any insult offered to myself or Combarons of the Ports, by an appeal to arms. I am, under the King, in 'some authority here, and I demand respect at my own board, for the guests honouring my hall. Richard of England, the noblest Norman of ye all, hath sat at my table before to-day."

"Out upon thee, for a churl who cannot take a jest," said Mauluc. "The Saxon puddle shows itself even in the wine-cup."

"You have chosen, Sir knight," returned the Mayor, turning fiercely upon the speaker, "to intrude within my house unasked, and you keep yourself unknown. You may have your own reasons for such secrecy; but if you wish to preserve it, let your tongue wag less saucily, lest I order my guard here to knock off your casque with the pommels of their daggers, and display the visage of the unthankful and rude guest."

Meantime, the King had been so much engaged in paying his devoirs to the Lady Bertha

during this controversy, that he had hardly remarked it; and he, accordingly, (during the increasing noise of the party) carried on his suit in a manner so unscrupulous, that he quickly offended the delicacy of the haughty beauty, and brought himself into disfavour, just at the moment his minion Mauluc had entangled himself with the Cinque Port Mayor.

“ I tell thee, uncourteous stranger,” continued the Mayor, “ that ye know no touch of gentle breeding. Your manners proclaim you of the base and popular. You have insulted the Cinque Ports in my presence, and by St. Paul, you shall answer it at dawn.”

“ Away,” said the Lady Bertha, rising and turning away from the King, at the same time taking the arm of her page. “ Away, Sir, I condemn myself for listening to one so insolent. You say, you serve the King. I doubt if one so base and rude ever durst set foot in his presence.”

“ Nay, fair Bertha,” returned the King, smiling at her wrath, “ consider this matter, and be not altogether angry with your servant. Permit

me, at least, to choose you for my mistress: to set your name in my orisons: to address my vows to and offer up my prayer for you in the coming struggle.”

The Lady Bertha, however, deigned no further notice of the suppliant monarch; she left the chamber by a small door at the upper end of the hall, in high dudgeon and disgust; and ascending the great staircase of the building, sought to calm her agitation by a promenade in the corridor.

Hither the King, who had quietly risen and followed, sought her. He was heated with the repeated draughts he had swallowed, and the excitement of whispering a flattering tale in her ear, and he was now in one of his worst moods, and ready for any act of villany that came in his way.

The Lady Bertha leaning from the window of the chamber she had just entered, as the moon rippled upon the river beneath, was gazing upon the tall anchoring barks and vessels of war which were moored to the wharf in front of the building, when the monarch entered,

and closing the door behind him, approached her.

As Bertha turned, upon hearing the clank of an armed tread in her chamber, the monarch seized her rudely in his arms and clasped her in his iron embrace ; but she extricated herself, and, nearly speechless with rage and astonishment, rushed towards the door to summon assistance.

The King, however, anticipated her, and placing himself before the door, seemed to enjoy her state of excitement, as almost speechless with rage she stood regarding him ; the reckless superiority he assumed, at the same time half disarming the dignity of her offended pride.

“ How is this, ruffian ? ” she exclaimed. “ You surely forget that I am the daughter of a Norman knight : you mistake me for the offspring of some beggarly serf, who is unable to protect her against violence. Quit the chamber, sirrah, or your life’s blood shall answer this assault.”

“ What ho there ! ” she cried to the guard who was stationed below the corridor. “ Help, I say.”

“ Blame me not, fair Bertha,” pleaded the King, again advancing and seizing her hand, at the same time dropping upon his knee. “ Blame me not for the excess of passion which has thus driven me to offend. Rather blame your own surpassing loveliness, which is the cause of that effect.”

There was now so great a disturbance in the hall below, that the lady’s cries for assistance were for some time unheard, and the reckless monarch, who was delighted with the confusion he was creating, might have proceeded to still further extremities, had not the page, who was in waiting at the end of the corridor, come to her assistance.

The monarch was enraged at the interruption, and at the same time remembered the hint Mauluc had given him, of the favour in which Bertha held the stripling.

“ How now, thou scornful page,” he said, seizing the lad by the breast of his doublet, “ I have heard of thy presumptuous conduct. Such temerity in one so base merits a severe chastisement.”

The Lady Bertha seeing her favourite in danger, forgot her offended pride, and throwing herself between them, arrested the King's arm, as he was about to strike the page with the dagger he had drawn from his girdle.

"Hurt not the boy," she cried, "I entreat, Sir knight."

The King paused: he could easily have twisted his iron arm from the lady's feeble grasp, and driven his sharp poniard into the bosom of the boy; but he stood for a moment transfixed, gazing upon his handsome features. He then smiled, as he turned his piercing ken upon the agitated Bertha; released the page from his strong gripe and sheathed his dagger, as the heavy tread of footsteps were heard approaching the chamber from the corridor.

The Lady Bertha seized the opportunity. "Fly," she said to the page, "conduct some person hither to arrest this fearful madman. He shall pay dearly for this temerity," she continued, as her courage and pride returned with the hope of assistance;—"his blood be upon his own head."

But the page, to the astonishment of the lady, instead of summoning assistance from the advancing parties, instantly secured the closed door by drawing the huge bolts, by which it was fastened, into their sockets, and shutting all assistance out.

The monarch's attention, meanwhile, seemed quite diverted from the Lady Bertha to the page. He watched the graceful figure of the youth with much apparent curiosity, as he secured the door of the chamber; for during the short struggle which had just taken place, he thought he had made a discovery which considerably interested him.

Be that, however, as it may, the page made fast the door of the chamber to the no small astonishment of the lady, just in the nick of time; for the next moment Sir Gilbert Daundelyonne himself, and several men-at-arms clamoured for admittance.

In another minute, "Sir knight," said the page, dropping on his knee, "you must either divulge your rank, or forfeit your life, for I conceive you wish to preserve your incognito

and your existence ; let me entreat you to think of some plan of escape."

" What means this mysterious conduct, minion ?" said Bertha to the page. " Have you leagued yourself with this ruffian to insult me ? Come from before the door, sirrah, and admit my father instantly, ere I bid him beat it from its fastenings, and inflict the punishment such conduct merits."

" Bear with me, lady," returned the page. " You must aid me to procure the escape of this person from your father's awakened wrath. It is the King."

The Lady Bertha was now struck with astonishment and dread. The terrible Norman, John of England, stood before her. A secret something, a sort of awe of she knew not what, had pervaded her from the moment his dark orbs had gleamed upon her through the bars of his helmet. She had half suspected the stranger was of high rank, but never dreamed for a moment that it was the Plantagenet himself who was pouring his unscrupulous advances into her ear. Yet there stood the dread monarch of

whom she had heard so much, in his dark mail, with arms folded, enjoying her astonishment and dismay, like some unreal vision in the gloom of her chamber.

Well knowing her father's stern disposition, she doubted little but that, if he entered and found a Norman knight, at that hour, in her chamber — even although that knight should confess himself his sovereign — he would slaughter him without mercy, even where he stood.

She, therefore, threw open the casement which looked out upon the wharf, and casting a hasty glance from it, desired the King to seize the moment and escape.

“ But a few minutes more,” she said, “ and the guests beneath will be alarmed. The but-tress serves, and you may descend with safety ; my page will guide you through the passage which admits to the quay, whence you may easily escape to the street.”

This advice seemed to have some weight with the monarch. The ground was, in truth, not a very dangerous distance ; and bidding

the page follow, he drew his blade, and taking it between his teeth, descended to the small green spot before the river in rear of the house.

The clash of weapons and a piercing shriek, proclaimed to the Lady Bertha that their retreat was intercepted. It was even so. When the King, after lowering himself from the window, by aid of the abutments in the masonry, followed by the active page, leapt upon the greensward, he found himself confronted by the young Lord of Folkstone; who, by order of Sir Gilbert Daundelyonne had been superintending the embarkation of his followers on the quay.

Naturally surprised at beholding a man descend from Lady Bertha's chamber window, Lord Folkstone determined to arrest him, and a fierce conflict immediately ensued, which would, in all probability, have ended in the capture of the monarch, had not Walter Mauluc joined him, who just before had been thrust from the hall of the building by order of the Mayor. The two succeeded in gaining a small boat

which was moored beside the stream, and the receding tide carried them down the river towards the ferry, which at that period plied between the Fisher's gate and Stonar ; whilst the page succeeded in escaping into the house.

Considering the importance of the expedition in which John was engaged, we might reasonably have supposed the present adventure would have satisfied him for the time, and that he would have been well content to have made good his retreat to his apartments in the castle, and by snatching a few hours' repose refreshed himself, ere dawn called him to the bustle of embarkation.

But the disposition of the King was now called into play. It was one of his peculiarities, when matters of great weight pressed upon his mind, to endeavour to divert himself with the most frivolous pursuits, and this too, at the precise moment one might have supposed him totally engrossed with the import of the matter in hand.

He was now in one of these insane moods, and companioned by one as reckless, unscrupulous,

and profligate as himself, seemed determined to give full indulgence to his riotous and savage propensities. He was in one of those dangerous moods that are yet to be seen in the wild, untamed spirits of the land. From the stern, revengeful Norman King, burnt up with inflaming wrath against Philip of France, and with hand stretched forth to grasp the person of Arthur of Britain, he had, for the moment, descended to the thoughtless reveller, determined to seek amusement in the lowest hostels of the town.

In this mood, the King and his companion floated down the stream till they reached the ferry, which, at that time, plied opposite the town of Stonar. He was somewhat annoyed that the page, whom he had resolved to bring with him, had escaped; but he determined to summon the boy before him in the morning.

The town of Stonar, scarcely a vestige of which now remains to point out its site, stood upon the sea-beach, about half-a-mile on the Thanet side of Sandwich. At this period it was a place of some importance, though from the increasing prosperity of Sandwich, and the

change in the Wantsune, together with the constant incursions made upon it by the French, who never failed to wreak their vengeance upon its walls whenever opportunity offered, it was at an early period ruined.

Between the men of Sandwich and Stonar there was a deadly feud. Like the Cinque Porters, they were a sort of rude, amphibious race, fierce and savage of nature; and their situation being upon the beachy girdle of the ocean, a mark for the enemy to pounce on, they knew no protection but the cross of the sword.

Like the Sandwichers, too, the men of Stonar were excellent sailors; but still they were a distinct race. They were even a more fierce, piratical, and lawless community of citizens than their neighbours. The town having in very ancient times been distinct even from the Isle of Thanet, and entirely surrounded by the sea and the estuary called the Wantsune, they lived a sort of wild, piratical life, and were much given to the practice of paultery, that is to say, of plundering

whatever unhappy vessels happened to be wrecked upon the surrounding coast.*

It was from such practices that the enmity and deadly hatred of the inhabitants of the two neighbouring towns had begun and had increased until, like the quarrel between the houses of Capulet and Montague, it oft-times

“Disturbed the quiet of their streets,”

and caused the citizens

“To quench the fire of their pernicious rage

With purple fountains issuing from their veins.”

This was more especially the case, since Sir John de Stonar and Sir Ralph Sandwich, who considered themselves the patrons of the adverse towns, for their own pride and purposes took up the quarrel of their townsfolk, and

* The inhabitants of Thanet were much given to the practice of plundering vessels in distress ; albeit they have always likewise been held in good repute for their boldness in going off to stranded ships. The practice of plundering wrecks they used to call *paultering*, and their share they named *guile share*, *i.e.* cheating share.

fomented their animosity by every means in their power.

As soon as the King and Mauluc (after being whirled about amongst the different craft and vessels at anchor—for they had no oars in the small boat they had jumped into—reached the Ferry, they were hailed by the guard at the Fisher's Gate, who threatened to fire at them if they did not draw to the side, and come ashore.

"Those who want us must take us," said Mauluc; "we can't stop if we would."

"Look to that boat there," said the officer of the guard, "those drunken scoundrels will be drowned else."

Upon this, four or five men-at-arms sprang into a boat which lay beside the bank, and with a few strokes came alongside in the rapid stream, captured, and brought them back, when the King and Mauluc, nothing loth, immediately leapt ashore.

"Whence come, and whither bound, my masters?" said the person who appeared the

principal of those assembled without the gate. "You seem marvellously ill-provided for a long voyage."

"What's that to thee, knave?" said the King. "Suffice it, we would pass into the town without more hindrance."

"Not without more hindrance, Sir Knight," returned the guard, who now saw he had persons of distinction to deal with, instead of common soldiers from one of the vessels in the haven. "Unless I know more reason for letting you pass our gates than your own desire to pass them, you'll stand but small chance of a lodging within the town to-night. Not the King himself should enter at my post here after sun-down, without a Cinque Port order signed by the Mayor."

"We're from the King's ship, friend," said Mauluc, "and have lost our oars by accident, and floated down the stream. Look into our boat; it hath the royal arms painted on the stern."

"May be so, comrade," said the guard; "nevertheless, some are said to bear the royal

arms who have no right to them,—witness the present royal preparation. Look into the boat, Gregory, and see if it be as he says. You'll get no admittance, any how, to-night," continued the Cinque Porter. "There's the guard-fire for you to lay before, my masters, or the hostel of the ferry, there, beside the gate. But no admittance into Sandwich to-night."

"Thou art but a surly churl, at best," said the King; "and thy tongue is as ready with treason as impertinence. To lay thee by the heels would teach thee civiler language. Take care I report not thy speech of this moment in a quarter which may cause thee to be planted quick in the earth as a disgrace to the town. By God's wrath, I am minded to strike thee where I stand."

"Best not," said the sturdy Cinque Porter, laughing, "lest I smite again. We hit hard here in Kent, and my defence is heavy as thine own; there, pass on, friend, ere worse come on't. Our dungeons are deep and cold for a lodging, and I've the royal orders to take up all brawlers

amongst the King's power to-night, and secure all deserters from his vessels."

"Thou shalt rue this impertinence, sirrah," said the King. "When next we meet, look to it."

"Go to, I care not for thee," returned the man; "I am a free burgess of Sandwich, and consequently thy equal. I defy thy threats, and if thou'lt take equal arms I'll try conclusions with thee where we stand. Draw, if you be a man."

"Agreed," said the King, "provided if I gain the first advantage, you admit me into the town."

"And so bring myself under the displeasure of the Mayor?" returned the other; "well, be it so, I fear not the result. Have at thee, caitiff!"

Upon this, about half-a-dozen of the guard, and as many half-drunken archers, who had been diceing and drinking in the low hostel in which passengers were wont to wait for the ferry-boat, with great glee formed a ring, and John found himself in a moment involved

in a quarrel with the Cinque Port officer, with a rabble around to see fair play.

The fellow drew his huge blade from the scabbard, and swinging it round his head, like a willow twig, brought it before him, and stood at guard.

“Come on, Sir boaster,” he said, “and I’ll show thee the weight of a seaman’s arm. By Saint Gundulph of Rochester, I’ll fight ye both, Knight and Esquire, and give ye all the advantage of your closed visors into the bargain.”

The Cinque Porter was, in truth, a tremendous fellow, standing nearly six feet four in height, and being clad in full armour, except only that his casque had no visor, he was equally armed with the adversary he purposed contending with.

“I’ve altered my mind,” said John, after looking at his antagonist for a moment. “It would be too great a fatigue to me to chastise thee. Go, fellow, I may not disgrace my weapon. If my esquire, here, likes to indulge thee,” he said, turning off, “he has my leave and licence to do so.”

This announcement was received by a perfect yell of derision.

"Ha, ha!" said the Sandwicher, "I thought what manner of men we had to deal withal. I would I might see thy visage, so that I might know thee again. By the mass, I'd proclaim both of ye as cowardly caitiffs to-morrow morning before the whole army."

"Darest thou pledge thyself to that?" said the King, turning and approaching him again.

"With my existence," said the fellow. "I'll meet thee anywhere thou darest appoint, and lend thee a buffet before the King's face, an thou wilt! Come, I'll lay thee a hundred crowns I do it."

"Be it so," said the King. "Hark in thine ear; be upon the quay beside the royal barque. Ask for Walter Mauluc, and without more ado redeem your wager. I pledge myself to answer it."

"Go to," returned the Sandwicher, turning away with a sneer, "if thou darest show thy nose, Sir Mauluc, I'll tweak it for thee glori-

ously :—I will, by the Lord, and pouch thy crowns into the bargain.”

“ Win them and have them,” said the King. “ Meanwhile, as you refuse us admission within your gates to-night, we must try for lodging further a-field. Order your ferry-man to waft us across this muddy ditch, that we may try our luck at the town of Stonar.”

CHAPTER XI.

MORE MATTER FOR A MAY MORNING.

Romeo, the hate I bear thee, can afford
No better term than this—Thou art a villain.

Tybalt, the reason that I have to love thee
Doth much excuse the appertaining rage
To such a greeting;—Villain I am none;
Therefore, fare well, I see thou know'st me not.

SHAKESPERE.

WHEN the King and Mauluc had been landed on the other side of the river, they walked leisurely along the road towards the town of Stonar. The road was by no means a safe one at night, for the marshes or low lands on this side were frequently inundated by the sea; so much so, that the town itself in winter was often in danger of being destroyed, and

high embankments were thrown up in various parts to secure the lands northward from the tides. On the side by which the King and Mauluc approached the town too, there was at this period a quantity of stunted underwood and something like a small wood, though the trees from their near situation to the sea had a bare and sickly look. Such as it was, however, it formed a sort of pleasaunce for the inhabitants of the town by day, and was not unfrequently the haunt of rogues and dangerous ruffians by night. The place, indeed, had been as often the scene of the lovers' rendezvous as of the murderers' lurking place; and if the wood could have spoken, it would have told many tales of maidens beguiled, travellers stopped, quarrels put to the arbitration of the sword, and other deeds of ill-omen.

As the King and Mauluc entered this plantation which stood some quarter of a mile betwixt town and town, they were aware of a party of men just emerging from its shadow, and they resolved to stop and observe their business at that hour. They therefore drew back behind the

embankment, as the parties approached the open space betwixt the sea-wall and the wood.

The new comers were three in number, and their bearing, and the hot haste with which two of them stepped from the covert, threw down their cloaks, drew their swords, and placed themselves, showed that the business in which they were engaged was a duel. The alacrity, however, of the first two who entered upon the open space, was by no means answered by the third person. He walked leisurely after the two gallants who had preceded him, his tone of expostulation plainly indicating that he wished to avoid proceeding to extremity.

The dress and bearing of the three proclaimed them above the common herd. Two of them, to all appearance, belonged to the higher class, the third, who seemed the least inclined for strife, of the better sort of citizens of the town.

"Gentlemen," he said, as he stood before his excited antagonists, who were two brothers, "I have thus far accompanied

you, but again I ask, may not so vindictive a business be foregone? That you hate me is apparent; but must that hate necessarily lead on to death?"

"Yes!" returned the elder of the two opposed. "Even so. Thou art the blaster of our fortunes by thy suit to our sister; and whilst she prodigally throws away her love on thee, whose connexion we desire not, she disobeys the wishes of her friends, and rejects for thy beggarly sake, a proper and fitting match."

"And this is all you have to urge against me?"

"No, not all!" returned the other. "Our houses have ever been at feud. Thou art of Sandwich—we of Stonar. We desire nothing in common with thee; nay, we have forbidden thee to hold converse with our sister; yet still like some common robber thou hauntest our walls, and disturbest our rest with thy love-sick ditties. In fine, we think thee unworthy of her."

"Let not that make a quarrel," said the

lover, "I think so too—have urged it to her myself."

"We came not hither to talk," returned the other brother. "Draw, villain."

It was lucky for the youth who thus appeared to have brought the wrath of the two brothers upon himself, that he was partially clothed in armour, which somewhat equalized the odds against him, as his opponents were merely dressed in the buff suits usually worn under harness. They, however, assailed him with so much fury that he was necessitated to call forth all his energies in order to save himself from death.

Placing his back against a tree, he managed with the long blade with which he was armed to parry many of the blows which, with their lighter weapons, they aimed at him; but as they evidently sought his life, whilst he merely fought on the defensive, it was clear that the odds must soon tell against him.

"Does your Highness mean to interfere in this duel?" said Mauluc to the King. "Me-thinks that youth fights well, and deserves

succour. I marvel what like is the maiden whose beauty could so entrance a man as to make him take both abuse and blows thus patiently. Will your Highness permit me to step forth and engage one of these malapert citizens? Methinks the youth cannot hold on against odds much longer."

"Mark!" said the King, "another actor appears to save you labour. Nay, by St. Paul, Sir Mauluc, is not this our minion, the skirted page?"

As Mauluc looked forth from the angle of the sea-wall, he beheld a fourth person step up and join the duellists; who, although he was not clad in the same garments in which they had so recently seen the youth, was, to all appearance, the Lady Bertha's page.

Whether or not he had been attracted to the spot by the clash of weapons, or that he was passing along the road by accident, he quickly hastened to the scene of action, and drawing his weapon placed himself beside the weaker party.

"I wear a sword," he said to the brothers, as they paused at this interruption, "and cannot

see a fellow-man oppressed. Shame on ye, gentlemen, thus to press a foe to death by odds."

The brothers were now heated with action and resolved on blood.

"Stand back, stripling," said he who appeared the elder of the two, a tall, muscular youth. "Stand back, I say, thou foolish boy, or else embrace thy death."

But the page, if the page it were, although so light and effeminate in figure as to appear no match for the bulky antagonist who addressed him, returned his scorn with interest, and quickly drew the assault upon himself.

"You're noble, Sir, no doubt," he said, "and doubtless have justice on your side; but your deeds smack something of the coward. Nay," he continued, "I'll drill your doublet for you, if you feel inclined to proceed in a more honourable encounter."

In fact, the stripling seemed as full of spirit as a young colt just broke loose, and addressed

himself to the encounter with so much activity and resolution, that his antagonist was fain to draw back in order to save himself from his weapon; and such was the skill the new comer eventually displayed, that he ran his opponent through the body and laid him dead upon the greensward. This placed the duel upon a more equal footing, and it would now have been fought out by the other two combatants, the new comer merely sheathing his weapon and carelessly looking on, had they not been again interrupted.

We have already said that the place had an evil report, and the present instance showed that such reputation was not altogether unfounded.

Whilst the King and Mauluc stood gazing upon the scene before them, and were just upon the point of stepping forth, and discovering themselves to the combatants, (the King being determined to seize upon the eccentric page, whose prowess had considerably astonished him), they found themselves

suddenly pounced upon from behind by a grisly horde of banditti who had stolen unperceived up the alley in which they stood.

“A prize, my masters all,” cried the chief of the party; “all waifs and strays without the walls to-night belong to the free men of Thanet.”

Whilst one half the band encompassed the King and his companion, the others rushed past and assailed the combatants, whom they quickly captured, the page alone escaping into the covert, and evading them.

Meanwhile the King and Mauluc, although surprised, instantly drew their weapons and laid resolutely about them, keeping the ruffians from coming to close quarters.

They would, nevertheless, have been quickly captured, had not a picket of the town guard of Stonar been heard approaching the wood, and the glare of the torches they carried was seen the next moment glancing through the thicket.

Upon this, the gentlemen of Thanet, as they termed themselves, were fain to draw off and

retreat into the fogs of the flats, which as completely concealed them as if they had plunged into the bowels of the earth.

The guard came rapidly up to the spot, where they had heard the sounds of the fray, and quickly stumbled upon the body of the youth who had been slain in the previous encounter.

“Ha! my masters all,” cried the chief, “here’s goodly work toward; I thought we were not deceived. These lewd Sandwichers have been molesting some of our people: disperse and scour the dyke, whilst I look who’s killed here.”

The King and his companion would fain have made off, but they were immediately surrounded, and captured.

“This is a business!” said the important official, as he knelt down and recognized the countenance of the slain, “why body o’ me, its surely our chief bailiff’s eldest son that these rascals have done a murder upon.”

“A couple of goodly varlets, by our Lady’s grace. Know you of this handy work, gentle-

men?" he continued, as he turned the light of his torch upon the monarch and his companion.

"We do;" said the King, who began to enjoy the officer's importance.

"Come, that's candid at all events," returned the officer. "You've been pretty busy here, anyhow. Who, and what are you?"

"We don't feel bound to answer that question," returned the monarch; "at any rate, not to thee."

"I thought as much," said the guard, "Truculent knaves, and resolute in evil. Take up the body, my mates, and lead on. I'll take these vermin before those who know how to enforce answer and shriek at the same moment. Fall in there, shoulder pikes, right about face, quick march."

When the party had cleared the ford, and waded through more than one swamp, they approached the walls of the somewhat singular town, and being admitted within the Gate, instantly marched to the bailiff's house,

who was quickly aroused from his bed by the unwelcome news that the body of his eldest son had just been found without the walls, and that two of the men who had slain him were captured and in custody of the night-guard.

Stonar, like Sandwich, was at this time filled with troops, many of whom, however, as the shipping served, had been embarked. Still the town, at this hour wrapped in slumber, contained a large quantity of knights and their followers within its walls, several of whom were lodging in the chief bailiff's house.

The King and Mauluc, meanwhile, having been conveyed into an apartment constituting the hall of the building, were immediately interrogated by the bailiff in the presence of several of the nobles, quartered in his house.

The culprits, however, flatly refused to give any account of themselves, or the manner in which the deceased person had met his death, or even to raise their visors before the assemblage.

"We are of the King's household," said

Mauluc, "and under a vow not to unhelm upon English ground. Unless force, therefore, be used, we decline complying with the order."

"You stand accused of a foul murder, sirrah," returned the bailiff; "and, by Heaven's grace! unless you can clear yourselves, or give some better account of your being upon the spot where the body was found, you shall die the death."

"It follows not, Sir Bailiff," said the monarch, "that because men were met whilst pursuing a path across your swamp without there, and where some officious knaves happened to stumble upon an unhandsome corse, that such persons have done a murder. As well might we accuse those who accuse us, and who in reality were in contact with the body ere we ourselves were brought back to the spot."

"Exactly so," said the bailiff, "I'm glad I've brought ye back to that point at all events. Strike off their helmets, men, without more words on the matter."

"Come, my masters," said the chief of the

guard approaching, "shall I unmuzzle your wisdoms? methinks I long to look upon faces which I am confident have the hangman's brand upon them, or they would not be so chary of the day-light."

"Force off their helmets, without more delay," said the bailiff, as the King drew back when the official approached.

The man-at-arms, upon this, was about to close upon the monarch and grasp his helm, when he was accommodated by so severe a blow from the gauntlet of the King, that his teeth rattled in his head like a box of dominoes, whilst the soldier who was about to officiate upon Mauluc received a similar favour.

"Tear off their casques, villains," roared the enraged bailiff; "they shall to the dungeon in the water-tower as soon as I have seen their faces."

"It shall not need," said the King, stepping with great dignity to the end of the table before which the bailiff and his party stood. "We will be our own armourers." So saying, he unfastened the small hooks which

secured his helmet, and threw it upon the board.

The bailiff and his followers looked upon the severe, dark features, curly beard, and jet black locks for a moment in some awe; the next, they beheld several of the assembled knights sink upon one knee.

“God be here,” said the bailiff, who was ignorant of the King’s person, “what means this?”

“That, traitor as you are,” returned the monarch, “you have no knee for your King, Sir bailiff. But, come, I forgive you; rise, and order wine to be served. The dawn approaches, and I must back to Sandwich without delay. We trifle time here.”

CHAPTER XII.

THE SPY SYSTEM.

Mad world, mad kings, mad composition.

—————To know the meaning
Of dangerous majesty, when, perchance, it frowns
More upon humour than advised respect.

SHAKESPERE.

THE first faint streaks of early dawn found the monarch and his companion safely arrived at their quarters in the castle we have described as situate just without the walls of the town of Sandwich. How the remaining hour betwixt the time we have left them in the town of Stonar, and their return was passed, the page of history does not tell. With the return of daylight, however, the sterner disposition of the monarch returned ; and, as he threw himself into a cumbrous oaken chair which with

one massive table, was all the furniture which graced the thick-walled and small apartment, he bent a stern and scowling glance upon the companion of his reckless pleasures, as if half inclined to pick a quarrel with him ; an accession of ill humour which the fatigue of a night passed without rest had caused.

A silver salver stood upon the table, which, with several flasks of liquor, had been left there the night before, and without speaking the monarch pointed to them.

Mauluc, however, who (ever suiting his bearing to the mood of the King), was standing demurely before the table with hands crossed and eyes upon the ground, saw not the motion of the King.

“How now, Sir?” said the monarch, sharply, “we would drink ; fill, and hand the wine.”

The minion with an obedient start immediately darted to the table, seized upon a flask, and pouring some of its contents into a goblet, was about to hand it.

“Who bade thee give me hypocras?” said the King; “I like it not so early. I had as lief swallow rat’s-bane.”

“Will your Highness taste pigment, mead, or claret?” inquired Mauluc; “all are here.”*

“I’ll touch neither, sirrah,” said the King; “on second thoughts, the sour cyder of that fat-headed Stonar bailiff, added to the claret of the Sandwich mayor, hath made me sick. Go, Sir knave, order those lazy varlets to sound the *reveille*. ’Tis time we thought of business; the day has dawned some time.”

“If I might presume to advise,” began Mauluc, with great deference.

“Well, Sir,” said the monarch, “thou art ever presumptuous, when thou darest. We give thee leave to presume; now, what would your wisdom advise?”

“That, as your Highness must necessarily

* Persons of high rank indulged in a great variety of liqueurs, as well as meats, at this period. They had pigment, morat, mead, hypocras, claret, cyder, perry, and ale.

feel some slight degree of fatigue, you permit me to arouse your people, and order them to prepare the bath."

"'Tis well," said the King; "do so quickly, and return hither. We would hold discourse with you upon the events of the night."

The esquire withdrew to execute his mission, and presently returned; when the King, again pointing to the liqueurs upon the table, signified that he had again changed his mind.

"Mead, I think, your Highness pointed to," said Mauluc, in doubt as to which he must serve.

"No, Sir, give me cyder," said the King; "my throat's parched, and would fain be washed by a copious draught."

The esquire handed the goblet upon bended knee. Upon other occasions—for instance, whilst he was the companion of his royal master's pleasant vices—Mauluc might have ventured to take glass for glass, as his equal for the time; but he well knew when majesty was dangerous, and how to "alter when he

alteration found." Any freedom in the present mood of the dangerous monarch might have been resented by a stroke of the royal dagger in the mouth.

"That page, Sir," said the King; "we would fain learn more about him. What knowest thou of his history?"

"Scarcely more, my Liege, than what I have already told your Highness. Whilst at Daundelyonne Castle, I failed of learning aught about him, as he was then almost a stranger. Gondibert, the Knight's jester, seemed the only person who was well acquainted with the lad; and, from the frequent conferences I saw them hold together, I suspect some near relationship between the pair."

"Take measures to have him watched," said the King, "and arrange so that both he and the Lady Bertha go on board the royal barque this morning. I would have his every motion noted," continued the monarch, "since I have suspicions regarding him which I shall not divulge, even to thee. Enough—look forth

from the embrasure in the turret: we hear the neigh of steeds without."

Sandwich Castle, which John had chosen for his quarters, on occasion of the embarkation of his power from that Cinque Port, we have already described as situate about half a bow-shot from the walls of the town, upon the Deal side. Except the esquire we have seen in close attendance upon him, and his own immediate body-guard, who were located in the few chambers this small fortress boasted, it was his present pleasure to be entirely alone. On some occasions, John chose no eyes but those of the especial favourites of the moment to pry into the transactions of his private hours.

At this period of our history, the monarch held in estimation and regard one of the greatest men of his day, a follower, whose devotion to his cause, and affection for his person no erring conduct in the management of the affairs of the kingdom, no inconstancy even towards himself, nay, not even the continual development of the cruel and tyrannous disposition of the King could alienate from his service. Hubert de

Burgh, a name made famous by the pen of the wonder of all time, was at this period of our story chamberlain to John, and enjoyed a larger share of his confidence and regard,—such as it was,—than any of the higher nobles of the kingdom. To the bosom of the gentle Hubert, as it was his pleasure to call this great man, were all his troubles, complaints, and indeed, some of his errors imparted; and yet, not even to him, his counsellor in adversity, his friend in need, his patient, enduring servant through fair and foul, would the monarch entirely throw off all reserve in his reckless pleasures. He feared fully to develope himself before Hubert, in those hours he set apart for the enjoyment of his grovelling propensities.

His crafty mind warned him, that on such occasions it were best to disport himself solely with those of his favourites who, incapable of managing the more weighty affairs of his kingdom, were yet the instruments he used; and, indeed, not unfrequently the victims of his deep schemes of villany—men whom he felt he could elevate to the level of companionship to

suit his lighter hours ; employ as the weapons of his vengeance, and degrade to the depths of ruin when no longer serviceable.

To Hubert, the trusty Hubert, were his most secret and trustworthy affairs committed. He was his safeguard and mediator — even at this period of his reign—betwixt the hot and fiery barons he so continually annoyed and vexed by the wrongs and insults put upon them.

At the present time Hubert de Burgh was the chief manager of the expedition, a sort of general-in-chief, who contrived to keep together the fiery elements he was mixed up with, and to conduct them in the path they were to pursue, whilst he himself appeared in his management to follow the suggestions of the overbearing, even while he lured them to his own path. Such was Hubert de Burgh amongst the warlike power of John : a man of rare mind, high integrity, and devoted loyalty ; and although he seemed to bend before the opinions of all—meek as the meanest esquire—yet possessing perhaps the boldest heart as he possessed the clearest head, of all that Norman host.

On this night Hubert de Burgh, together with the Earls of Essex, Pembroke, and several other nobles had been quartered at the monastery of the Carmelites,* or White Friars, then situate at the south-western side of the town, between the ramparts and new street, some remains of the foundation of which building are yet to be seen. It was a monastery of considerable extent, and had been established by William, Lord Clinton of Folkstone and Goulstone, the father of the young esquire already mentioned in this history.

The King himself had ordered apartments to be prepared for him in this monastery, as it was the largest in the town; but, hating the clergy, he had suddenly changed his mind, and taken up his quarters, as we have seen without the walls, giving directions to his chamberlain, Hubert, to occupy them in his stead, and assume the entire superin-

* The Carmelites in truth came to England in the beginning of the twelfth century. They were constituted to a rule and order, by Honorius the Third, by the name of "The Brothers of the order of the blessed Virgin Mary of Mount Carmel."

tendence of the embarkation of his troops, in order that he himself might throw off all the cares of the expedition, and hold an insane revel in the streets of the town.

Accordingly, when Walter Mauluc, in obedience to the King's request, stepped into the small turret chamber, which opened from the apartment they occupied, and looked forth upon the greensward before the town wall, he beheld the chamberlain, Hubert de Burgh, attended by a plump of spears, his pennon fluttering behind him, in full gallop towards the royal quarter. As the eye of the esquire glanced from the narrow embrasure over the green space between the castle and the town, and then ranged round over the walls and buildings, looking fresh and fair in the clear morning, the bladed grass upon the slopes of the ramparts, heavy with dew, and glittering like jewels in the morning sun, the scene which presented itself—although then, perhaps, not an uncommon one in our own days—would have been considered somewhat curious. Upon the ramparts were to be seen many hundreds

of the infantry of the King's army, who, finding no quarters after their heavy day's march, had there, with the readiness with which the soldiery of the time were wont to take up their quarters in the open air, thrown themselves down for the night. These men, together with several companies of bowmen, from different counties, were now getting under arms, and mustered by their different leaders, preparing to march into the town, in order to procure refreshment ere they were embarked.

On the space likewise between the castle and the gates of the town, on either hand, were now to be seen emerging from the freshly-opened portals, hundreds of esquires, pages, horse-boys, and all the attendants upon a knightly host, careering about the fields, examining steeds, consulting upon casualties which had happened in the crowded stables during the night, and attending to what was needful and necessary, as careful keepers of the noble animals about to be embarked.

As soon as Walter Mauluc observed the approach of the King's chamberlain, he re-entered the chamber, and announced his

coming. At the same moment an attendant, the first who had ventured to approach the royal presence since daybreak, noiselessly glided into the apartment, and standing mute at the entrance he had barely passed, awaited licence to be permitted speech.

The appearance of this man was somewhat singular. Instead of the body-servant of a powerful sovereign, he looked the personification of an executioner's assistant. To the most villanous features, and diabolical cast of countenance, was added a form such as in early youth the mind is wont to furnish forth for the demon of a fairy tale. His body, although distorted and deformed, possessed immense strength, the muscles of his arms and legs shewing prominently in the short and sleeveless dress he wore, as those of some posture-master of our own days; whilst on his ghastly and livid face, his close-cropped beard of the deepest black gave him a most sinister appearance. He was a Breton by birth, and from his personal deformity was generally known by the sobriquet of *de Bossu*, or,

the hunchbacked. Indeed, his very look proclaimed him :—

A fellow by the hand of nature marked,
Quoted and signed to do a deed of shame.

Such as he was, however, he had been recommended to the service of John, as a fit instrument for some piece of duty the monarch had required at the hands of a servant with a good sword and an unscrupulous conscience, and his execution of the commission entrusted to him had led on to fortune, John eventually keeping him near his person, and employing him from time to time in those services which required secrecy, despatch, craft, and courage.

That he deserved such trust and employment was apparent to all who knew him, since his sagacity and cunning were extraordinary when employed as a spy ; and when any intricate business or mysterious matter was to be fathomed or transacted, the crafty bravo and his myrmidons were released from attendance and put upon the trail.

At the present time, being the perfection of a

dumb waiter, and swift serving man, he was on duty as valet to the eccentric King ; and his appearance, as he glided within the entrance, announced that the bath Mauluc had ordered to be prepared was in readiness.

So soon as this singular looking valet observed that the eye of the monarch had glanced upon him, he was about to withdraw as noiselessly as he had entered—that being the etiquette. But the monarch permitted his glance to meet his eye a second time, with a look of intelligence readily understood, and he remained fixed in his first position.

“Go, Sir Mauluc,” said the King, “receive the report of our chamberlain in the hall below whilst we bathe and break our fast ; anon we purpose getting to horse and joining our assembled nobles in the town ; that done, be master of your time for the next half hour.”

The esquire bowed low and withdrew.

“Hark you hither, sirrah,” said the monarch, turning to his attendant when they were alone ; “we have a mission to entrust you with, which requires some of the craft, secrecy, and manage-

ment we have reason to know you possess. You have seen the Knight of Daundelyonne, and know his person? Good. In his daughter's service there is a page. You have noted the youth?" continued the King, as the ruffian suffered his stern features to relax into a grin of intelligence. "You have even perhaps noted the intimacy between the boy and his mistress. Is it not so? speak, sirrah; we know of old thy depth of observation."

"I have, my Liege," said the official, letting his hoarse voice be heard for the first time. "I noted certain love passages between the lad and the lady, whose face drew all eyes towards her during the time your highness gave audience to the Cinque Port barons yesterday after your arrival at the house of the mayor."

"You think then there is something like love between them from what you have observed? You think the haughty beauty loves this page, and that the boy, despite the peril of entertaining her passion, returns it?"

"I do, my Liege," said the attendant.

"And what fate," said the King, "awaits the

youth, should the stern Knight of Daundelyonne discover their love?"

"The death of one by the knight's hand," returned the ruffian; "perhaps his own offspring will share the same fate."

"You are right in that," said the monarch, "though in one small instance your sagacity has been suffered to sleep. We have ourselves made an amusing and interesting discovery in that quarter last night. The Lady Bertha's passion is likely to end but in a dream of love after all. That page, Sir knave, is a woman in disguise."

The ogre, without betraying surprise, merely suffered his piercing eyes to open wide, elevating his shaggy eyebrows, and following the King with his glance, as the monarch paced in high glee up and down the small chamber.

"Hark'ee," continued the King, "we have seen this damsel in two several characters last night, and she has much interested us. You understand me? there is some mystery attached to her. It is for thee to fathom it ere we start, and also to take care that she accompanies the

expedition. We appoint thee guardian angel over her person ; she must be ours ; and above all, if you see the esquire Mauluc approach her in the way of gallantry, you have our command to drive your dagger to the hilt in his vitals."

The ruffian's eye sparkled, and his hand wandered unconsciously towards that part of his belt where the ready weapon hung, in token of his readiness to serve his royal patron. This was one of the many eccentricities of John's crooked policy. In his pleasures, as in matters of graver import, his dealings were ever double. It seemed, he had no spark of confidence in the honesty of this poor compounded clay, man, but ever set his instruments as spies upon each other, the consequence of which ignoble treachery was certain failure in whatever he undertook. Suspicion, jealousy, and distrust of all around him seemed the prevailing qualities of his mind during his graver moments, whilst again in his gayer mood he appeared careless of all save enjoyment of the present hour.

"Yes," he continued, as he dismissed his attendants after he had taken the refreshment of

the bath, and arrayed himself in a gorgeous suit of chain mail, made somewhat lighter than that intended for the battle field ; “ we will use this gentle Mauluc in our service, but not permit him to grow upon us. His ambitious spirit points to the lovely Bertha for a bride ; *that* may hardly be at present. Service may purchase some such reward, and to say truth, he hath been faithful and unscrupulous in our cause. But for Bertha Daundelyonne, she is a prize worthy of deeper devotion to our cause than anything the esquire hath yet performed. We must not think of mating her and disposing of the lands of Daundelyonne to any follower ; at all events, we will annul the engagement already entered into during our brother’s reign. The Lord of Folkstone must seek some other bride.”

The King now rang a small silver bell which stood upon the table, a signal that the privacy which it was his constant pleasure to indulge during the early part of the day, might be broken in upon, and half a dozen esquires immediately were in attendance. Shortly after, he descended to the hall of the castle, a gloomy, thick-walled

apartment, dimly lighted by its narrow windows on either side, and one huge iron lamp which was suspended from its arched roof. Here John gave audience to Hubert de Burgh, and issued his orders ere he met those assembled chieftains whose followers had not already been embarked, and their vessels towed out to sea the day before.

To Hubert, amongst other orders, he gave directions to levy contributions upon all the religious houses in the town of Sandwich and Stonar; in other words, to rob the church, a practice he was especially fond of, and never failed to exercise in his expeditions, whenever in want of the sinews of war.

“ These fat-headed clergymen are rich in this Cinque Port, good Hubert,” he said; “ and we shall on our return visit their coffers at more leisure. Meanwhile, do thou squeeze from their hoards some imprisoned angels for present use, ere we depart. The tide, you say, serves not for many hours in this muddy haven, an accident which gives time for matters of business; and we mean to ensure these Cinque Ports in the pri-

vileges they claim. We see their value, and will grant the indulgences given them by precedent kings.”*

* John was greatly the friend of the Cinque Ports, and of all maritime affairs.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE MONASTERY OF THE CARMELITES AT
SANDWICH.

Hostess. Do your offices, do your offices, Master Fang,
and master Snare ; do me, do me, do me your
offices.

Falstaff. How now ? Whose mare's dead ? What's the
matter ?

Fang. I arrest you at the suit of Mistress Quickly.

Falstaff. Away, varlets ! draw, Bardolph.

Fang. A rescue ! a rescue.

Hostess. Good people, bring a rescue or two.

SHAKESPERE.

WE must again introduce our readers for a brief space into the streets of Sandwich, which on this morning presented a curious and stirring appearance.

Those persons, indeed, who look upon this Cinque Port at the present time, would utterly

JOHN OF ENGLAND.

fail in identifying it with the same town of a few centuries back, so completely changed is it in its streets and thoroughfares, so demolished in all its monastic remains, so ruined in its embattled towers, its walls, gate-houses, and ramparts. All, all are gone which could tell of the reign of John. Nay, the very buildings which were reared during the reign of a succeeding line of kings and which played their part in the wars of England during the palmy days of the Cinque Ports, are almost effaced from the surface of the earth. "Green mounds," as Sir Walter says, "and shattered ruins alone remain to tell of the whereabouts of those noble buildings of the days of the Norman kings and knights of old.

The knights are dust,
Their swords are rust,
Their souls are with the saints, we trust.

On this morning the streets and thoroughfares of Sandwich displayed a bustling appearance, and even the green pastures on its one side, and the roads which traversed the marshes and swampy grounds on the other, were filled with actors in the stirring scene.

Within the town, we have already said, some part of the warlike power of John was quartered, together with many of the nobles and their followers who accompanied him in his expedition.

“All furnished, all in arms,” they were now to be seen in all the bustle of preparation, whilst the waters of the Haven which flowed up on the Thanet side of the town being filled with high-decked vessels of war, a perfect forest of masts extended along its tortuous course, as the vessels lay waiting for the tide to waft them out to sea with their warlike freightage.

Meanwhile, acting upon the hint he had received, the crafty de Bossu had used all diligence in endeavouring to ascertain the whereabouts of the page the King had described to him, and gather something of his history. Mingling amongst the followers of the Daundelyonne, he endeavoured to sift them upon the subject, as they were embarking. He could only learn, however, that the youth had been missing on that morning, but was at the present moment in

attendance upon his lady. Those whom the cunning de Bossu questioned spoke, nevertheless, somewhat mysteriously about the page. They seemed to think that the great favour he had so suddenly crept into with their lady savoured of the marvellous. They also hinted that more than one amongst them had not failed to mark that he appeared sometimes possessed with the power of being in two places at once. They suspected that even his surpassing beauty told against him, and that not to mince the matter, he had dealings with the devil, and could translate himself at pleasure into whatever form he pleased.

As soon, therefore, as the bravo had gathered all the information he could upon the subject of the page, he resolved that in order to obey to the letter the instructions of the King, it was necessary that he should see the lad with his own eyes, since now he was in a measure placed under his surveillance. In virtue, therefore, of his situation as an attendant upon John, he passed along the green bank beside the river, and introduced himself amongst the guards and re-

tainers in waiting at the house of the mayor, where the King was himself expected. Here in the principal apartment he found a crowd of nobles, knights, and ladies, who were to go on board the royal barque, amongst whom the Lady Bertha Daundelyonne, having just received an especial order to that effect, was in waiting with her attendants.

Under pretence of searching for some person amidst the gay assemblage, de Bossu approached so near them that he could overhear their conversation ; he also marked the dress worn by the youth, which consisted merely of the graceful habiliments of a sort of minstrel or troubadour of the period, his doublet having a conical hood attached, which could be drawn at pleasure, like a monk's cowl, over his head and face. The dress, however, plain as it was, set off to advantage the graceful figure of the page, whose exceeding beauty could hardly fail of striking all who beheld him.

Leaving the mayor's house, the bravo now re-threaded his way through the town towards the castle, and, as he approached the ramparts,

on turning the corner of one of the narrow streets, his steps were arrested in astonishment as he beheld to all appearance the very person he had so recently seen in the apartment he had just left—the Lady Bertha's page.

At first the hireling thought he must have been deceived: the street was thronged, and the lad mingled amongst the crowd, and was lost for the moment, as a large party of bowmen came with swinging pace down the street, and made for the river's bank. He, however, quickened his steps, and again distinctly beheld, as he thought, the Lady Bertha's page, the only difference in his dress being a light hauberk of steel, which appeared to have been hastily thrown over his minstrel's tunic; a stout weapon at his side, and a round target suspended from his neck.

The lad appeared anxious to avoid observation; he looked carefully and cautiously around him. As he stopped suddenly before the low-arched entrance of the hospital of St. John,

which was situate on the north-west side of the corn-market, and, after a hasty glance or two to observe if he was followed, he stooped and darted through the opening.

As de Bossu prepared to follow, he found that he was not the only person apparently engaged in the chase, inasmuch as two of the town-guard came almost breathless up to the spot and accosted him.

"Has a lad passed this way?" said he, who appeared the head constable, "dressed something like a minstrel."

"No," said de Bossu, "not to my knowledge."

"We tracked him almost to this spot, not a minute back," said the constable. "He must have entered the hospital, here."

"Ha!" exclaimed de Bossu, "stop, let me bethink me. I did see such a youth but now: he turned to the right, and passed the corner there towards the corn-market."

"Gramercy," said the other, "I thought I was not mistaken in my man: follow."

“Stay!” said de Bossu, “perhaps I can assist you in the search. What offence has this springald committed?”

“Merely murder,” said the constable; “nothing else, so far as I know; that is to say, he is suspected of that crime. The son of the bailiff of Stonar was found last night lying dead beside the town dyke, and it has been traced to this youngster.”

So saying, the men pursued their way, and, disappearing round the corner, entered the corn-market.

If de Bossu meant to mislead the constable in their search by setting them, as he thought, on a wrong scent, he missed his mark, as in sending them round the corner of the street they were sure to intercept the person they sought, if he passed out at the other side. Accordingly, as he himself hastened into the hospital, the mysterious page passed out at the wider opening on the other side, which leads directly into the market, and almost ran against the officers who were in search of him.

“Yield thee, thief,” said the principal officer,

lowering his axe to the other's breast; "I arrest thee in the name of the mayor and barons of the five ports. Deliver up your weapon."

"To whom, and for what?" said the youth, springing back, and unsheathing his sword like lightning. "I am not used to yielding, especially to such a thing as thou."

"Take him dead or alive," said the Sandwich functionary, preparing to rush in and pin the lad to the walls of the hospital.

The youth, however, seemed not at all inclined to become an easy prey: with wonderful strength and agility, considering his slight figure, he darted back a few paces, put aside the halbert of the officer with a most curious parry, and dealt that official such a tremendous blow upon his head-piece, that he brought him to his knees in a twinkling. Meanwhile, the other officer would have thrust in and captured him, but de Bossu at that moment dashed from the hospital, and interfered in the matter.

"Stand back, my masters all," he said; "I forbid the arrest. This lad is in the King's service, and must go free."

“That must he not,” said a third officer, at this moment adding himself to the party, “since I lay claim to his body on the part of the Abbot of Stonar, against whom his offence principally lies, seeing he has killed a citizen of that place.”

“And I,” said a tall monk, at that moment coming up, and who wore his cowl so closely drawn over his features that nothing but his sparkling eyes were to be seen ; “I must inform you that you are all mistaken in your search. I lay claim to the person of this would-be page, who is, indeed, neither more nor less than a female in disguise, and who is accused of sorcery and other heinous offences committed within the walls of my establishment at Salmstone. In the name of our holy mother church, I order all here to aid me in his capture.”

“If she be a female,” said the Sandwich officer, “she must indeed be a devil or a witch, for such a blow as just now felled me was never dealt by mortal female in this world before ; my skull-cap is well nigh cloven in twain. Man or woman, however, I cannot yield my claim, she must to the jail incontinent, so here

goes. I arrest thee on the part of the Mayor of Sandwich."

"And I," said the other, "on the part of the Abbot of Stonar."

"And I lay claim to thee," said the monk, (beckoning to a party of the bow-men of Salmstone), as an escaped criminal from holy mother church, a sorceress, a witch, an enemy of mankind."

The whole party upon this made a rush towards the stripling, who (in spite of the dauntless manner in which he prepared himself to resist his numerous foes) must have become the capture of one or other of the claimants. But de Bossu, at the very moment of their rush, snatched him back as he stood before their opposing weapons, and bade him turn and fly through the passage he had but just passed, and make for the quay, where he would find those who would be ready to assist his escape.

The youth, therefore, quick as lightning turned, and darting through the passage, the opposing weapons of the different claimants clashed together as they rushed after him.

The monastery of the Carmelites in Sandwich was a large and stately building. Its chapel in particular was a magnificent structure. The Carmelite friars were mendicants by profession, depending upon casual charity for support. So much were the Carmelites esteemed for their superior sanctity and the strictness of their lives, that their chapel was much affected by the better sort of people in the town as a place of sepulture.

Indeed the fraternity of Carmelites in Sandwich at this period stood in great estimation amongst the inhabitants. Their superior, Nicholas Bundock was a monk of great sanctity. He had led a solitary life in Asia for many years, but had been promoted to this convent upon its first creation.

We have already said that Hubert de Burgh and several nobles had their present quarters in the monastery of the Carmelites at Sandwich. Its grey walls, accordingly, were now filled with retainers and men at arms, whilst even the secluded chapel which, since its erection had seldom seen aught besides the gaunt and skeleton figures and macerated features of the

holy brotherhood of its order, now rang to the warriors' strides, or echoed to the lightsome laugh of the knight and his gay esquire.

It was on the evening of this day, and after the transactions we have already described as having taken place in the town of Sandwich, that the Carmelite superior was visited by Father Eustatius, the superior of Salmstone Grange. Anything more dissimilar than this pair of churchmen it would perhaps be difficult to imagine. The Carmelite was (for the period in which he lived) a sincerely religious man, inasmuch as he pinched and macerated his body with bad food, thin drinks and scarcity, and wore out his life and constitution by continual penance and prayer. In short, he was strictly religious after his own fashion, knowing no touch of real feeling or charity towards his neighbours. A hard, stern, iron-hearted bigot, living between the white walls of his convent, as if the whole world around him was composed of incarnate fiends, among whom he was for his sins located, but with whom he was to hold as little converse as might be. To worship during the hours of sleep, bare

knee'd upon the cold flags of his chapel, amidst the smell of death, fainting for want of food and weariness, or to grind pease and pulse between his teeth in place of the wholesome and nutritious food of man, was in his notion to gain the steep and thorny path of heaven.

The superior of Salmstone whom we have already described, was an ambitious and unscrupulous monk, living for himself alone, believing nothing except what he could see, hear, touch, taste, or smell. A thriving churchman, of strong passions and unscrupulous conscience, to whom midnight masses were purgatory before his time, and pease and pulse poison to his blood.

Dismounting from his mule on the morning of the day whose events we have recorded, Eustatius had sought the cell-like parlour of the convent in which the Carmelite passed most of his secluded hours. "The peace of heaven descend upon our holy brother," he said on entering; "how fares it with the holy fraternity of Mount Carmel?"

"But ill, Eustatius," said the Carmelite, rising to receive his friend, "but ill; when a

legion of wicked fiends have possession of the holy walls of my dwelling-house. But ill, when riot, high living, and the smell of savoury soups and generous wines fill every crevice of an edifice dedicated to God and religion."

"'Tis like," returned the other, "this wicked reign will bring its own punishment anon. I come, brother, to be your guest for a brief space, perhaps but for a night, whilst I make search after a waif or stray from my convent walls. Besides which I crave an interview with Hubert de Burgh, in order to denounce the conduct of one of his followers in this war, who hath in my person insulted mother church."

"Thou wilt meet but small redress, good Eustatius," returned the Carmelite; "they are fiends all, and hate things pertaining to godliness and grace. Hubert de Burgh, by order of the King, hath sacked my house here of money and plate for present necessities of this war—nay, he hath levied contributions upon all and sundry, even taking from the chantries and other religious endowments of the town, the little he could filch and steal. Thou wilt get but small redress, be thy complaint

what it may," continued the monk; "but stay, I hear the church bell tolling, and that reminds me there is a corpse to be entombed at this hour—the body of a youth, the son of the bailiff of Stonar, who was found murdered last night without the walls of that town. I must attend the burial."

"Be it so," said the superior of Salmstone. "At more leisure I would hold further converse with thee upon matters of deep import to holy mother church. Methinks, this reign portends but ill towards the clergy, and my intent, and that which I would fain confide to thine ear, must be talked of where there are neither walls to hear nor roof to shelter us. Enough: I leave thee for the present to pursue the search I have hinted at. Should I not succeed in it, I shall, perhaps, cross the seas with the expedition about to sail."

"Thou goest to Rome, brother," said the Carmelite, "is't not so?"

"Such is my ultimate purpose," said the other; "in the mean time peace and goodwill

attend thee. After curfew we will hold further counsel together. Farewell, brother."

"A resolved and zealous servant," said the Carmelite looking after the tall form of the monk Eustatius, as he glided from the apartment.

"Truly, the church in these evil days is somewhat wanting in zealous servants; what he would confide to me I partly guess; and in sooth, he hath a heart to conceive and hand to execute a summary vengeance against those who brave the anger of Rome."

So saying, the Carmelite arose from his seat and took his way into the chapel of the building.

In the cold grey chapel of the establishment, as the mellow tints of the setting sun streamed through the gothic windows upon the damp pavement, a monk was seen digging a grave. As he threw out the last shovel-ful of chalky soil, noisome from mingled bones returning to dust, the deep toll of the convent bell announced the approach of the tenant of the narrow dwelling.

We wish it were in our power to paint the solemnity of the monastic scene. The cold and grave-like chapel, its white flags only partially illumined by the many-tinted rays that streamed upon them from the narrow windows, upon which here and there was prostrated the dusky form of some skeleton-looking monk, half insane with misdirected devotion, and remorse for the ill-deeds of a former life of violence. Sauntering up and down too, and even some of them engaged in the deepest prayer, were to be seen the noble forms and martial figures of several warriors clad in complete steel—these constituted the picture.

In those days, the monasteries and abbeys throughout the land were frequently the temporary dwellings of the noble and the knightly. Houses of entertainment being scarce and hardly fit, except upon an emergency, for the retainers of the great. There was little, indeed, between the hut and the castle in the way of dwelling, and the monastery, consequently, was oftentimes the resort of the high-born and rich

during their expeditions. Besides which, the superiors of many of the religious establishments were frequently of noble birth, and as profuse in their style of living as the gay relatives or friends who sought their cloisters.

Cold, sepulchral, and dim, however, looked the chapel of the Carmelites ; and, as the bell sent forth its dull, heavy, monotonous beat, the half-whispered groan of a conscience-troubled, sack-cloth-galled votary, now and again startled the ear, amidst the measured tread of the warriors, and their suppressed conversation.

We know not if such be the feeling engendered in others by a contemplation of the cathedral remains and monastic ruins of former days ; but, in such vicinity, we feel almost conscious of a state of previous existence. Dreams of shadowy recollection seem to flit across the fancy, devotion to steal upon the heart, and, as the bat flies his cloistered flight, the pomp and glory of the sometime rulers who dwelt in the massive and magnificent structures they had erected, are again presented before us as a

familiar scene, together with the knightly form of the soldier of the cross, the vassal, the monk, and the man-at-arms of a by-gone age. We hear the solemn swell of voices during the midnight mass. The perfume of the censer pervades the aisle, banners of ancestral chivalry wave mournfully from the arched roof; and mitre, crosier, plumed helm, and blazoned shield, fill up the swelling scene.

At the period of which we treat, the ceremonies of the church were conducted with a pomp and circumstance of which, in later days, we have but a feeble idea; and, amidst a life of almost perpetual war, matters of religion were so deeply impressed upon the minds of men, that some part of the daily leisure of the knights and soldiers was passed in the society of the monk, or in acts of devotion.

As the deep tones of the bell of the monastery sounded, the solemn procession of death approached and darkened the arched entrance of the chapel, and the long train which followed the body denoted that the corpse was of some estate. Then came the ceremony and the requiem of the assembled monks.

Scarcely, however, had the obsequies of the deceased been completed, ere a tumult arose, apparently in the street without. Footsteps were heard approaching, and a youth, closely pursued by several armed men, rushed into the chapel, darted through the assembled throng, and springing to the altar, shouted out the word "Sanctuary!"

The fugitive was the same person we have already seen escape from the fangs of the law on a former occasion, and having been again tracked by the pursuers who were in quest of him, he had actually been driven to earth, as it were, and forced to take sanctuary in the very chapel where the opponent he had slain was about to be consigned to the grave.

His baffled opponents drew off when they saw he had gained the altar, but they placed a strong guard without the chapel, so that eventually, as he would be driven by hunger from his refuge, it was little less than a certainty that he would be captured.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE ROYAL EMBARCATION.

Let it be a quarrel between us, if you list.

I embrace it.

How shall I know thee again ?

Give me any gage of thine, and I will wear it in my bonnet. Then, if ever thou darest acknowledge it, I will make it a quarrel.

SHAKSPERE.

ON the grassy margin of the river Stour, just without the walls of Sandwich, and beside the principal vessels which were lying moored opposite the house of the Mayor, their masts glittering with pennons, their cordage gorgeous with fluttering banners, and the very sails, here and there unfurled, displaying the crests and heraldic symbols of the various nobles of the land, stood John of

England himself. Surrounded by his martial court and the chief officers of his army. He was giving audience amidst the knightly throng, in the open air, to the several Cinque Port functionaries assembled.

The surrounding scene, even unpeopled by the actors then playing their parts upon its stage, was one of extreme beauty. On the Thanet side, the eye travelled over the Sandwich flats, at that period partially inundated by the washes, which a few years before flowed entirely over them, and which even then could only at intervals, be safely passed.

On the left, upon a small elevation, then also partially surrounded by the ooze of the salt deep, over which the heron flapped his wing, and the sea-bird screamed, stood the grey and massive walls and town of Richborough, the Rutupæ of the Romans, where the imperial eagle had been first planted when Cæsar's legions leapt ashore in Britain. On the right, and built upon the wild sea-beach, stood the Norman town of Stonar, whilst far away in the distance, amidst the dark and shadowy woods,

rose the spires and towers of the splendid abbey of Minster.

The road, also, which at this period traversed the oozy and spongy marshes of the flats, presented a somewhat different aspect to what it now displays, when, perchance, a solitary van, drawn by a raw-boned horse, is almost the only object to be seen crawling along, far as the eye can reach.

It was now rendered picturesque by the figures traversing its unvarying extent: more than one dark mass of horsemen were to be observed, in close array, and full trot, towards the town; their lances glittering in the sun-beams, and their pennons fluttering in the wind. Carts and wains, too, laden with heavy baggage, came toiling onwards, and pilgrims, wayfarers, and camp-followers wended their way.

Meanwhile, as we have said, whilst the King was delayed by the tide which was to carry himself and followers out to sea, he held his court upon the river's bank.

John was the friend of the Cinque Ports, and during his reign confirmed all the free liberties

and customs which they had enjoyed under his ancestors ; and the Cinque Port Barons, on this occasion, had sought to provide him with a sufficiency of ships for his expedition. Unluckily, however, from some oversight or other, it so happened that now, when he was upon the point of embarkation, it was discovered that there were no transports to convey the war-engines he had brought with him from the tower, and the irritable monarch reproved the amphibious functionaries assembled before him in good set terms.

“Now, by Heaven’s wrath !” he said, “we are deceived in these Barons. Bring hither, Sir Hubert, the roll containing the list of men and vessels they are bound to furnish forth by their charter, and by which suit and service they are discharged from military duties in the field.”

“Our ports, my sovereign Liege—” interrupted the Mayor of Hastings.

“Silence, Sir knave,” cried the King, “ye are too forward here: we will be heard, but not answered. Our precedent Kings of Eng-

land have held you answerable for a proper complement of vessels, and, by our Lady's Grace ! you shall answer this."

"The Barons of the Cinque Ports, my Liege," urged the Mayor of Sandwich, "have exceeded in this instance the number of vessels by fifteen."

"Instance me no instances, sirrah," returned the fierce King. "What avail your instances to me, unless you can float those moving towers and engines standing yonder upon the grass, beside your muddy stream? Read, Hubert, the number of vessels these Barons are bound to find, and, by my halidom, I swear if there be but deficiency of a single cock-boat, I'll make them perform duty with the army in the field, and allot them the brunt of the battle. Read to them, Hubert, and give them the form of their forty days' summons to begin with."

Upon this Hubert de Burgh, uncoiling a large roll of parchment, which he took from an attendant, and read with a loud voice the following :—

“Hubert de Burgh, Constable of Dover Castle and Warden of the Cinque Ports, greeting :

“Whereas the Barons of the Cinque Ports owe us the following services when required, viz., that the said ports and their members shall, upon forty days’ notice, fit out and supply the King with fifty-seven ships, each having a master and twenty men—”

“If your royalty will permit me to speak—” urged the mayor of Romney.”

“We will permit no man to speak,” exclaimed the angry King, “until the constable has expounded the law to us, as it is laid down.”

“Each,” continued Hubert, “having a master and twenty men well armed and arrayed at their own charge and proper cost for fifteen days : and at the expiration of that time, the said ships and men to be at our own proper charge and pay, so long as we shall need them. The master of each ship to have sixpence, the constable sixpence, and each man threepence per day, as by the term of the charter and liberties granted by our predecessors, and which we have confirmed. We, hereby, order such

armament to assemble at, or near Sandwich for our voyage to France, and summon the said barons to perform the said service, by sending such ships and mariners well arrayed.”*

“Now, Sirs,” said the King, “you hear our order given full forty days back, what say you to it? Our war-engines cumber your Havenbanks, whilst the troops that are to use them are already at sea.”

The Cinque Port functionaries were a good deal confounded by the ire of the King. They thought themselves in the right, and yet knew not exactly where the mistake, if any there was, had been made. The anger of the monarch was, in truth, a short madness, and always hurried him onward when once awakened. His policy generally led him to cultivate the good-will of his sailors, and that very morning he had granted considerable indulgence to the very men he was now about to blame unjustly.

Meanwhile, the royal wrath had so confounded the combarons of the port that, sturdy

* This was the actual order given to the Cinque Ports in the year 1393.

as they were, they seemed completely chap-fallen. They turned from one to the other, whilst they stood before the monarch, and consulted together, as we may sometimes see a body of city functionaries, when anything goes wrong before royalty in the present day.

At length, when the mayor of Sandwich was clearing his throat to address the King, Gondibert, the jester, stopped him.

“When you have nothing to say, brother,” said the jester, “say nothing. A weak defence strengthens the adversary, and silence is better than a bad reply. Unless your mayorship hath a tongue ready to shoot forth words as a catapult sends bolts; or can build up excuses and lies as high as yonder moving tower, there, I’d have you keep silence; kings dislike hearing reason, especially when they are wroth.”

“Hark ye, hither,” said the King to Hubert de Burgh, “hand me the list of vessels these men are bound to find, in order that we may see which of the ports hath dared to attempt imposition; and do you, sir mayor of Sandwich, read it aloud, that your brothers in

council may answer for the vessels of each port."

The burly mayor stepped forward upon this order into the circle, and took the list which an esquire handed to him ; but to read it was quite another matter. He gazed at it with lack-lustre eye, looked wistfully at his combarons, then turned it upside down, then held it sideways, as he stroked the grey beard which descended a couple of inches over his mailed breast, and at length, twisting his moustache, as he uttered a deep sigh, he confessed he knew nought about the matter.

He was indifferently well skilled in sea port matters, and all that pertained to the Cinque Ports in particular, he said, but reading about them was quite out of his line.

"He was no clerk," he muttered, "but a sailor born, and had done Richard the First good service when he sailed with his great fleet on the expedition to the Holy Land. Richard was a sailor as well as a King," he continued, "and made laws as well as wars for the benefit of his seamen."

The very mention of Richard's name, contrasting it with his own, was a sure way to increase the anger of John, and accordingly the Sandwich mayor found himself again in hot water.

“By St. Hildegarde of Kent!” cried the King, “we remember as much. By the same token, one of his maritime laws hath reference to such a defaulter as yourself. Namely, that any magistrate of his Cinque Ports, on conviction, should have his head shaved, melted pitch poured upon it, and then covered with feathers, that he might be known as a knave.” *

“You, sir, mayor of Hastings,” continued the King, “how many vessels hath your port sent?”

“Six, my liege,” said the chief magistrate of Hastings, a short, fat functionary, puffing under the weight of his harness and agitation. “Six,

* King Richard was the author of this law, amongst others, whilst at Chinon, in France, in 1189, for the government of his fleet in the expedition to the Holy Land. These laws are extremely curious.

my liege, being three more than were required on this occasion."

"Romney," said the King sharply.

"Six also, your highness," said the mayor of Romney, a huge, burly fellow with a beard like a coppice of brushwood; "Six also, being one more than was ordered."

"Dover," said the King.

"Thirty sail, my liege," said the mayor of Dover, "which includes those of Margate, Birchington, Ringwold, Folkstone, and Faversham."

"Sandwich," proceeded the King.

"Nine goodly vessels, may it satisfy your royal greatness," said the mayor of Sandwich, "besides which, Winchelsea, Seaforth, Pevensey, Bulverheath, Petit Ham, Hindley Grange, and Beaksboune, have contributed thirteen extra vessels for your royal service on this occasion."

The King was for the moment silenced; he saw he had been unjust in his censure, and he turned his wrath to another quarter. "To you, Sir Gilbert Daundelyonne," he said (as his eye met the gaze of that knight whilst standing amongst the

assembled nobles on one side of the circle), "to you I sent an especial message by Walter Mauluc, regarding these engines, desiring that shipping might be seized by the Dover men, and brought round here for their transport."

"Such service was performed by me on receipt of your highness's packet to that effect," returned the Knight of Daundelyonne. "To Sir Hubert de Burgh I delivered the order, and the Mayor of Dover himself seized two merchant vessels, which I commissioned Lord Folkstone, my own esquire, to bring round."

"And which has not been performed," said the King.

"Your highness will pardon me," returned Sir Gilbert, proudly, "my household are not wont to disobey my orders. The Lord of Folkstone went on board one of the vessels, and himself brought them 'ere night-fall into yonder haven."

Sir Gilbert was not a man to bear undeserved reproof tamely. He was one of the few knights who dared to speak his mind to Majesty, whatever mood it chanced to wear.

“To your highness’s own order regarding these vessels is this matter to be referred,” he remarked, “and not to any omission of mine. The vessels destined for the war-engines have been appropriated to other uses. Part of your own followers have been removed from the royal vessel, in order to make room for some ladies of the court, whilst the Hospitallers have possession of the other craft.”

“Then, by St. Paul !” said the King, “these Cinque Port barons must seize upon whatever vessels they can first catch in the channel, and transport the engines after us. ’Tis too late to alter matters now. Walter Mauluc, do thou see to this, for we are somewhat tired of this matter.”

The council was now about to break up, and the King prepared to move on towards the royal vessel, when another incident for the moment arrested him. At the name of Mauluc, a sturdy-looking man-at-arms, who had been standing somewhat behind the Cinque Port functionaries, stepped into the circle, and without more ado, drawing back his huge arm, which

bore upon it the Cinque Port badge, half lion half boat, dealt the esquire so heavy a buffet with his gauntleted fist, that the helmet of the Poicteon rang again. The esquire was standing so near the King when he received the blow, that the monarch recoiled for a moment, and laid his hand upon his sword, whilst half a dozen of the surrounding nobles in an instant springing upon the stranger, were about to slaughter him where he stood. The King, however, after a glance at the offender, called to them to stand from about him, whilst the esquire, furious with rage, had also drawn his weapon to cut him down.

“We know something of this,” said John, laughing; “stand back, my masters all, I say; and, fellow, do thou step forth. Knowest thou the penalty of dealing a blow so near our person? Thy right hand stands forfeit.”

“A Cinque Port burgess never forfeits his word,” returned the sturdy mariner. “The forfeit due, it must be paid; better your highness lost a stout limb, ever willing to do good service, than Pierce Corbeht forfeit his word, though given to a cowardly knave.”

“My liege, I crave leave to be myself the punisher of this affront,” said Mauluc, burning with ire: “the villain shall die upon my weapon’s point.”

“I ask no other,” said the Cinque Porter, “always providing thou canst perform thy boast. If not, so shall I be sure to save a limb and chastise a knave.”

“Not so,” said John; “we permit not our household to be mixed up in such brawls. Thou art a sturdy fellow,” he continued, addressing the man, “and we offer thee service amongst our own guard.”

“Gramercy,” said the fellow; “I accept the same, since I suppose it’s the only way I can redeem my right hand. Your follower yonder will hold me at least a man of my word, since I promised to smite him, even if I found him in your royal presence.”

“Out, dunghill,” exclaimed Mauluc, contemptuously; “I hold no conversation with thee.”

“Is not thy name Mauluc?” said the other—
“Walter Mauluc?”

“It is,” returned the esquire; “what hast thou to do with the name of a gentleman?”

“’Tis easier to bear a gentleman’s name,” said the Cinque Porter, “than to earn one. Many a knave I know bears a goodly title, whom the hangman’s cord would better grace. If it was not thyself who gave the name of Walter Mauluc last night at the Fisher’s Gate, a greater knave borrowed such title for the nonce. I would I might light upon the thief.”

“No more of this,” said the King, aside to Mauluc; “thou must be content, sir esquire, to bear the blow, which, of right, belonged to our own face.”

CHAPTER XV.

A HOSTILE FLEET IN OLDEN TIMES.

Suppose that you have seen
The well-appointed king
Embark his royalty ; and his brave fleet
With silken streamers the young Phœbus fanning.
Play with your fancies, and in them behold
Upon the hempen tackle, ship-boys climbing ;
Hear the shrill whistle, which doth order give
To sounds confused ; behold the threaten sails
Borne with the invisible and creeping wind,
Draw the huge bottoms through the furrow'd sea.

SHAKSPERE.

A FEW hours from the date of the transactions we have described, and of the many thousands of troops, and choice-drawn cavaliers who had thronged the town of Sandwich, only a few hundred remained, and these merely tarried for lack of ships to waft them across the channel.

The well-appointed King had “embarked his royalty,” and his brave fleet having been stayed by the adverse winds which had also detained the French ambassador on our shores, now spread their “threaden sails,” and were borne towards France,

A city on the inconstant billows dancing.

To those who have beheld the embarkation of an army in modern times, the sight of the English power shipped in the huge bottoms which constituted the vessels of war of that period — their curious and unwieldy forms, their style of rigging, their gorgeous sails, silken streamers, and innumerable banners and flags, together with the awkward and ungainly manner in which they seemed to creep out to sea, would have perhaps caused a smile, so singularly cumbrous and awkward was the whole “turn out.”

The moon shone forth brightly as the returning tide set in motion the different vessels which lay before the town, the royal barque being almost the last which was towed out to sea.

This vessel, which bore the King and his immediate attendants, together with the Earls of Salisbury, Pembroke, Norfolk, and Essex, would in itself have caused some little curiosity to a sailor of modern times. Its sails bore the arms of England, gaudily emblazoned, and the huge hull standing high out of the water, looked still more unwieldy from the lofty turretted castles built up upon its prow and stern, whilst every part of its sides seemed so filled with the bright arms of the knights and retainers on board, that it appeared a wonder the sailors could work their craft.

Far as the eye could reach, along the tortuous course of the haven, as it flowed out to the main of waters, in the clear moonlight, were to be seen the gorgeous vessels slowly and majestically creeping out to sea, whilst the deep wailing cry of the sailors and men-at-arms, as they towed the different craft along the stream, occasionally intermingled with a wild flourish of martial music added to the interest of the scene.

On the poop of the royal vessel, holding converse with the Earl of Salisbury and others stood the King and his court, a glittering throng, whilst the waist, the deck, and every part of the ship seemed filled and bristling with weapons and bright armour.

According to the orders of the monarch, many of the nobles who were to have sailed in the royal barque had been ordered into other vessels, the better to accommodate the knight of Daundelyonne, the Lady Bertha, and several of her train. The monarch, indeed, was now pleased to give a considerable share of his time and attention to the proud beauty, as the vessel slowly and majestically glided past the gates of the town, whose walls and towers, silvered by the moon, were crowded at this part with the townsfolk. The Cinque Port functionaries standing bare-headed, lowering their weapons as the royal vessel sailed by. Then came the deafening shout from the citizens, answered from vessel to vessel far away in the distance, and re-echoed again in the old town of Stonar;—the

exulting shout of brave English hearts, ever ready for daring deeds when the note of preparation sounds upon the blast.

At this period of John's reign, many of the bold barons who formed his court, and fought his battles, yet retained for their King the loyalty and devotion due to the crown. The utter depravity and remorseless cruelty of his disposition had not, as yet, fully developed themselves. Deeds of horror, sufficient even to startle the iron nerves of the fierce Norman noble, whose whole life was a scene of oppression towards the conquered race of condemned English, were yet to be performed by this "vice of Kings."

Their indignation required to be aroused by a succession of atrocities, crowned and completed by a savage and unnatural murder, which startled the whole Christian world, and blotting John's name from the hearts of the knightly and noble of the kingdom, made him an object of the blackest hatred to mankind.

As the vessel slowly dropped down the tide towards the open sea, the monarch ever and anon holding converse with those around him,

bestowed his more lightsome discourse upon Bertha Daundelyonne, whose exceeding beauty had, for the moment, apparently made considerable impression upon him.

That lady, also, whom the adventure of the previous night might have sufficiently taught the danger of too great an intimacy with unscrupulous greatness, felt herself duly elated by the attentions of royalty; so much so, that she forgot the insult which had been so recently offered to her, in consideration of the exalted rank of him who condescended to whisper his adulation in her ear.

In those days the might and majesty of a King shone out with a force and splendour now totally unknown. The sceptre carried with it the awe and dread consequent upon unlimited power, whilst the person of the wielder was hedged with a divinity in the eye of the beholder, that in our own levelling times would be derided.

As the Lady Bertha looked around her upon the assemblage, who, high as they were in rank, stood aloof from the Ma-

jesty of England, and beheld herself alone admitted to a familiar intercourse; as she glanced around, and beheld those gallant forms of England's chivalry clasped in mail, their fine features displayed through the open visors of their helmets, and their eyes bent with looks of admiration upon her own surpassing form; who can wonder if her heart beat high with pride, and that she indulged in an intoxicating dream of future greatness, which for the moment almost unsettled her reason?

The besetting sin of Bertha Daundelyonne was pride: she could never for a moment forget that on the maternal side she fetched her life and being from a Saxon prince; but she forgot, as she listened to the honied sentences of the Norman, that she listened to one of the bitter enemies of her mother's race: she forgot the persecution her own ancestors had suffered at the hands of the conquerors; a persecution and degradation which placed them on a level with the children of Ammon, who were ground under saws and axes, and harrows of iron.

To Walter Mauluc, who was in attendance

upon John, though at this period he had not attained to so much favour as to venture to approach the royal person upon all occasions, and who, consequently, remained in the back ground, the familiar discourse between Bertha Daundelyonne and the monarch was gall and wormwood. The esquire possessed a mounting spirit; he was just the sort of person to rise in the times in which he lived. A fellow by the hand of nature marked and signed to be the ready slave of an unscrupulous King. But he also possessed some touches of pride. He loved the haughty Bertha with a deep and absorbing passion, and he wished to achieve her at the same time that he achieved greatness. The esquire of Poitou would have been willing to wade to power and fortune through rivers of blood, but he recoiled at the idea of her he loved becoming the favourite even of a crowned King. He must receive the Lady Bertha pure and unspotted, or he had rather steer his course across the ocean of adventurous deeds alone.

The King's female wards at this period could not marry any person, however agreeable to

themselves and their relations, without the royal consent. A cruel and ignominious servitude, under which heiresses of the noblest families and most opulent fortunes were exposed to sale, or obliged to purchase the liberty of disposing of themselves in marriage by great sums of money either to the King, or to some greedy courtier, to whom he had granted or sold their marriage—no less a sum than ten thousand marks, equivalent to one hundred thousand pounds of our present coin having been paid for the wardship and marriage of a single heiress. This cruel servitude was afterwards extended to male heirs.

Between Gondibert, the jester of Daundelyonne, and Walter Mauluc, there had sprung up, even from the beginning of their acquaintance, a deadly animosity. The jester was a man of great penetration. Whatever had been his reason for taking upon himself the trade of a fool—for no man knew his history previous to his introduction into the knight's service some few years before the commencement of our story—there was an immensity of shrewd-

ness and wisdom concealed beneath the cockcomb it was his pleasure to wear ; and he uttered his harsh truths in any presence, regardless of favour or fear ; at the same time it was worthy of observation, that he bore a heart of the greatest humanity towards the unfortunate. In fact, the jester of Daundelyonne was a man of no common mind ; he was one who had seen much of the world and of mankind, and was, for the time in which he lived, an extraordinary person.

During the passage of the royal barque down the river, Gondibert having been admitted amongst Sir Gilbert's train, stalked about the vessel for some time, amusing himself with remarking all that was going on, and regarding the efforts of the sailors to haul the huge floating castle along from either bank. At length, with the licence his profession allowed him, he thrust himself into the royal circle, and as his eye caught the present disposition of affairs, he intruded his conversation upon the party.

“ Of all passions, brother,” he said to Mauluc,

whom he saw with finger on lip watching the object of his regard, "of all passions jealousy exacts the hardest service. Nay, start not, sir esquire, I am no subject for your poniard. My wits ooze out unconsciously without tapping. Jealousy, I say, pays the bitterest wages."

"Go to, Sir knave," said Mauluc, who saw that the observation had been overheard by Hugo Daundelyonne, and who, accordingly put the best face upon it. "What service does jealousy exact?"

"Marry, Sir esquire," said the jester, "cannot you tell that from the great mass of your experience? Why, Sir, its service is to watch the *success* of the enemy."

The esquire again started, and looked towards the King, who was at that moment leaning forward to whisper something into the ear of the fair Bertha, as he took her hand:—

"And its wages, Sir fool," he said, "are?—"

"*To be sure of it,*" returned the jester, as he glided from his side, and approached the King.

All lovers—even a royal one, may, as Shakspeare says, be “gravelled for lack of matter.” John seemed to have arrived at some such extremity, for the Lady Bertha, as she stood before him, seemed from her manner as if she had just heard something she could not altogether comprehend. The King, too, appeared glad of a diversion in his favour, and he hailed the approach of the jester as a favourable interruption. Jesters, indeed, were all licenced :

“They had liberty,
Withal, as large a charter as the wind,
To blow on whom they pleased.”

Gondibert, therefore, elbowed his way through the press, and with the greatest effrontery passed the King without speech or gesture of deference, upon which the monarch called him back.

“The whip might teach you manners,” he said ; “whose fool art thou ?”

“Truly,” said Gondibert, “I am but as your highness, a sort of public functionary attached

to no one in particular, but yet serving for the nonce, too. I creep me in here amongst the Daundelyonne. I would fain follow these wars, for I hate the French as cordially as the French hate us on this side the herring pond. Methinks I could like to trounce a frog hugely, for the frogs are a bloated and arrogant race."

"Gramercy," said the King, "thou art a right valiant fool, the first I ever knew fond of fighting ; and thou hatest the French, eh ? a goodly recruit."

"Truly, cousin John," said the jester, "I despise the French because the French cannot despise us, although they hate us as cordially as we hate them. We have the honour of their hate, only because they cannot despise us."

"This fellow shows wisdom in his folly," said the King to the Lady Bertha.

"Your highness will find him a shrewd knave," said the lady.

"You know him, then ?" enquired the King.

"He lightens our hall with his jests," said the lady, "when it is his pleasure to sojourn

at Daundelyonne. He is a great favourite of my father's—more his companion and adviser at times, than his jester."

"Levity," said the jester, who had carelessly leant over the side of the vessel during this conversation, "is often less foolish, and gravity less wise than each of them appears, daughter."

"We are pleased, at all events," said the King, "at having the approval of so sapient a councillor as yourself, sir jester, in our quarrel with France. Doubtless, the war will thrive when your wisdom sanctions it"

"I said not so much as that, cousin John," returned the jester; "in all quarrels, it has been truly said, there are sure to be faults on both sides. A quarrel, like a spark, frequently cannot be produced without blows. War is a game, cousin, in which princes seldom win—their subjects never. If all these gallant gentlemen I see around us here, but knew how little they really add to their comfort and reputation by the display they are making for a

brief hour under the blessed sun of heaven, they would go home to their wives and look after their estates and servitors."

"Gramercy," said the King, laughing, "you are a philosopher as well as a fool, I see."

As the King thus diverted himself in converse with those around, the "deep drawing barques," got fairly out to sea, and gradually the white-faced shores of England seemed to dissolve in distance, as those of France became each instant more distinct.

CHAPTER XVI.

A CINQUE PORT PUNISHMENT.

A creature unprepared, unmeet for death.

After him, fellows, drag him to the block.

SHAKSPERE.

NEAR the marshes beyond the Canterbury gate at Sandwich, two rivulets meandered in former times, called the south and north streams. Through one of these streams the sea once flowed; and although its waters are now considerably diminished, it still bears the name by which it was designated in former ages—a name terrible in the ears of the evil-doer and the criminal.

It was the famous water of Guestling, in which felons were punished by drowning, their bodies being carried by the current which flowed through the marshes of Lydden Valley into the main of waters.

On the morning subsequent to the day on which John had sailed from Sandwich, and whilst the remnant of his power still remained in the town, a small party of the Cinque Port guard were seen passing from the court-house, in charge of a couple of prisoners about to be executed in the waters of the Guestling. They passed through the gate-house, and making a half turn to the right, stood next minute upon the margin of the fatal waters of this ominous-looking ditch.

The mode of punishment, to which we have referred, was a Cinque Port privilege, and was a horrible mode of executing vengeance or justice ; the criminal being disposed of exactly after the same fashion that a mangy cur is now sometimes put to death.

The two persons about to be executed on the

present occasion were a youth and a middle-aged man. They had been on that morning tried by a summary Cinque Port process, a sort of drum-head court martial. Both had been found guilty of the offences laid to their charge, and as both also were guilty of being without friends in the place, they had been doomed, and were brought straight from the place of trial, to be soused into the Lethean stream.

“Will any one do me a message for the love of heaven, and in pity for a wretched sinner?” said the elder of the two prisoners, a coarse looking ruffian, who shuddered with horror at the sight of the yellow stream he was brought beside.

“To the fiend with your messages,” said the grisly looking executioner, as he adjusted a strong cord to a heavy mass of iron, which, with several similar weights was lying on the banks of the stream just at this spot. “Thou art but a howling sinner; why not take thy chance like a man? Come, kneel here and stoop your head,

that I may place this jewel beneath your ear. See there, how patiently your companion waits his turn."

The executioner pointed, as he spoke, to the other criminal, who, standing with arms folded, figure erect, and head thrown back, seemed to hold himself above exchanging a word with the ruffians about to launch him next minute into eternity.

It was the youth whom we have already noticed in this story, the same who had intruded himself into the duel before the walls of Stonar, and whom we have also seen take sanctuary in the monastery of the Carmelites, from whence he had been ultimately captured, after the departure of the troops from the town.

"See how coolly that good youth awaits his fate," said the executioner, as he uncoiled his rope, and prepared to lay hands upon the elder prisoner.

"'Tis of him I would speak," said the man ; "I pray you, send for some priest to confess me ; I cannot die thus like a dog, with all my sins upon my head."

“ Bind and gag him, men,” said the executioner impatiently to his assistants ; “ you should have thought of that before,” he continued to the criminal. “ Come, prepare, sirrah ; we can’t stand here all day drowning one man in the Guestling. There’s plenty of work on hand since the army lay in our town. Body o’ me ! there’s three fellows to be whipped at Hog’s Corner ; there’s Ralph Spigernel to have his ear slit off and nailed to a cart wheel with a four-penny nail, in the butchery. There’s dame Illwill to be carried round the ramparts, up Cokel lane, through the fish-market, and thence round the cross in the corn-market to pillory gate ; there to be burnt in the cheek, and banished the town for lying and slander. There’s Piere Barre, the blacksmith, to be beheaded under the gallows without Sandown gate, for high treason, in speaking ill of the King, and saying Prince Arthur was rightful heir to the crown. There’s Maud Mutch to be burnt in the castle field for bewitching the mayor’s pigs. There’s two young women to be publicly whipped for theft from the archers of the

King's guard ; and there's Madge Johnson, Maria Waldiard, Ann Margery, and Dennis Cardwell, besides two others, to be banished for a year and a day, and marked with a hot iron in the cheek."

The Cinque Port functionary would have doubtless enumerated many more equally agreeable duties he had to perform, for his office seemed quite to his taste, and its execution a labour of love. But he found himself necessitated to stop from sheer want of breath, whilst the elder prisoner, with a face of horror, looked around in every direction, as the assistants pinioned his arms preparatory to casting him into the stream. Whilst he was yet doing so, a knight completely armed, accompanied by his esquire, rode up to the spot, and pulling up his steed before the group, lowered his plumed head and gazed for a moment at the party.

"I pray you, sir knight, for heaven's love," said the criminal, "interest yourself to save me from this horrid fate. Believe me, I am innocent of any crime. Undo my bonds, good Sir, and I have much to tell you—state secrets, matters

of great weight. Nay, believe me, sir knight, the fate of those in rank as exalted as thine own, are bound up in my existence."

"Who and what is he?" inquired the knight, "and what is his crime?"

"Nay, I know but little of the matter, Sir Walter de Wingham," returned the executioner, "save that I have a secret warrant for his execution. Last night, I believe, he struck at the life of some one high in authority and about the person of the King, and he must die the death—"

"I beseech ye," said the culprit, springing forward and extricating himself from the hands of the men who held him, at the same time throwing himself upon the ground, and clasping the feet of the knight's horse. "I beseech ye, noble Sir, stay the execution."

The knight reined back his horse and raised his lance.

"Leave your grasp upon my horse's knee, hound," he said, "lest I strike and save the hangman labour. What communication has he to make?" he inquired of the executioner.

"Pshaw," returned the functionary; "'tis simply a device to gain a few minutes more, ere the waters hide his body from the open world. Come, sirrah, take your bath with a good grace, and save these gentlemen the trouble of forcing you to swallow the draught."

"Let me purchase but a short hour of life," persisted the man, "only one short hour, sir knight. For the sake of yonder youth, who is too noble to beg his life—hear me."

"The Cinque Port laws are stern and unalterable," said Sir Walter; "who is the youth you speak of?"

The knight turned his steed as he spoke and approached the other prisoner. He seemed surprised at his figure and bearing, and immediately determined to interest himself in his favour.

"How comes it, sir troubadour," he said on observing in the habiliments of the youth tokens of a professor of the joyous science, "how comes it that I find you in such a situation, and thus consorted?"

"For my situation," said the youth, "it is the

result of falling into the hands of the rude uncivilized sailors of yonder town."

"And wherefore condemned to this ignominious death?" inquired the knight.

"I slew the son of one of their magistrates in the neighbouring port of Stonar," returned the other.

"In fair fight?" inquired de Wingham.

"In fair and open conflict," replied the youth; "I am incapable of the foul crime of murder they have charged me with."

"Wilt take service with me?" said de Wingham, "I am bound for France."

"Willingly," said the youth.

"Then, by heaven thou shalt not die the death of a common stabber," said the knight. "Here, Guichard," he continued, beckoning his esquire, "dismount and unpinion his arms. Now, good youth, strike a blow for your own freedom, and make for yonder town, whilst I keep these hang-dogs in check."

The esquire upon this dismounted, and cut the cords which bound the youth's hands with his dagger, whilst the knight, opposing himself

to the executioner and his assistants, kept them from recapturing him.

During the confusion which this interference created, a female who had been crouching down and was wailing beside the stream, suddenly jumped up, and severed the cords which bound the limbs of the ruffian who had been pleading so strenuously for life a few minutes before. The action having been unobserved whilst the Sandwich functionaries were engaged in an angry expostulation with the knight, both prisoners managed to escape.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE STRICKEN FIELD.

King John, your King, and England's, doth approach,
Commander of this hot, malicious day !
And, like a jolly troop of huntsmen, come
Our lusty English ; all with purpled hands,
Dyed in the dying slaughter of their foes.
Open your gates, and give the victors way.

SHAKSPERE.

WE must now follow the English monarch in his swift passage towards France, and also give a brief summary of the events which immediately followed the declaration of war on his landing in that country.

A feeble government, eluded laws, and a violent and tyrannical prince, had given many of John's Norman subjects considerable disgust. They had before complained of the denial of

justice in his court, and accordingly many of them now secretly leaned to the party of Philip, and solicited redress from him as their superior lord.

Arthur of Bretagne, although he has been familiarized to our eyes by Shakespere, as a mere child, possessing all the winning eloquence of a prattler of some nine or ten years of age, and whose very pleading for life and eyesight has all the infantine shrewdness of the nursery, was, in truth, at this period rising to man's estate.

Nature and fortune had indeed joined to make him great.

“Of nature's gifts he might with lilies boast,”

and to a form of perfection was added a disposition sweet as summer.

The mind of the young Duke had been early impressed by many of the nobles around him with the dangerous character of his uncle John—nay, from infancy he had been taught to fear him. The very name of the English King, whispered in the gloaming and in the gloomy chambers of his castle-home, whilst nursed to

slumber under his mother's eye, would cause a shudder and a start. It was a name of ill-omen to his ear, boding the evil which it seemed his destiny to suffer at his cruel kinsman's hands.

The young Duke, thus early made sensible of his unnatural uncle's disposition, had already sought security by a union with Philip, and was at this period with the army, which had commenced hostilities against the King of England.

Philip had knighted him with his own hand, and invested him with the counties of Anjou and Maine, which had been previously resigned to the English monarch.

Ere, therefore, the thunder of the war (as it rolled onward with John) burst upon the ears of this "unhair'd soldier," with the assistance of Philip he had besieged and taken Telliers and Boutevant, and, following up these successes, advanced upon and captured Mortmain and Lyons, after a feeble resistance.

The progress of their army was, indeed, for a short time as rapid as they could wish, and the French King, vowing he would never cease hostilities till John was satisfied to remain content

with his English dominions alone, advanced next upon Gournai, which he invested, and, opening the sluices of the lake, which lay close to the place, poured such a torrent into the town, that the garrison were glad to escape, thus winning it without striking a single blow. Arthur, in the meantime, at the head of a small army, and intoxicated with military ardour, suddenly breaking into Poitou, marched upon Mirabeau, where Queen Elinor had just arrived, and immediately laid siege to that place.

The Queen-mother, who was lodged in the town with a very small garrison, the fortifications being also in a ruinous state, was on the point of being captured by the chivalrous youth, when John with his power suddenly, like some unexpected tempest, burst upon his camp, and dispersed his hopes on the winds.

Although we have not thought it necessary, after seeing the English King embark his royalty, to follow his power step by step, we shall take leave to introduce our readers to the scene at this moment enacting near Mirabeau.

John, who could even on occasions of imminent peril to his life and kingdom, display an indolence and inactivity, which rendered him contemptible to all around, had, in this pursuit, if we may so call it—exhibited an extraordinary degree of rapidity in his movements. He seemed burnt up with inflaming wrath, and, advancing by forced marches, fell so suddenly upon Arthur and his little army, that, after a short but severe engagement, he completely routed them almost with the advance-guard of his power. The Count de la Marche and Geoffrey de Lusignan, together with several Barons, who had revolted from John, succeeded, however, in rallying a strong body of French knights, and made so desperate a stand around the heroic Arthur, that they nearly succeeded in effecting his escape.

Geoffrey de Lusignan, meanwhile, ere he was aware of the proximity of the vindictive John, had beaten down a portion of the walls of Mirabeau, and entered the place at the head of his chivalry ; for many hours maintained his ground in expectation of support, and had even driven the fierce Elinor to the

utmost extremity. At this moment, John, bending all his energies towards the capture of Arthur, furiously assailed a part of the Prince's camp, where De la Marche was making a stand ; so that the grandson and grandmother were being nearly captured at the same time. The latter event, however, was prevented by a small party of English knights, who, under command of a man of gigantic stature, made a sudden dash for the town, spurred furiously across the breach, pierced their way to where the Queen was waging an unequal conflict with her foes, and succeeded in bringing her off in safety, capturing Geoffrey de Lusignan at the same moment.

The engagement, indeed, as was not uncommon at that period, was divided into at least half a dozen separate encounters, in which the several leaders of renown seemed fighting on their own private account, and the whole battle might be said to sway to and fro like a troubled sea, with a sound, in the absence of all noise of cannon and musketry, as of many thousand smiths at work upon their anvils.

Meantime, whilst John with savage fury, and surrounded by his knights, penetrated to the spot where the young Prince was endeavouring to make a stand, an alarm was raised that the Queen was either killed or taken prisoner ; on which the monarch bore back and disengaged himself from the press.

“ Who has seen Sir Richard Faulconbridge ?” he asked, as he reined in his steed.

“ But now he was here,” said the Earl of Salisbury ; “ I saw him raging like a tiger by your highness’s side.”

“ Do you behold him still ?” said John, “ in the press yonder ?”

“ I see him not,” returned the Earl.

“ Then is he dead !” groaned John ; “ a heavy loss at such a moment. We came on with too small a force. See, our people give way here. Our mother is assailed too, and I fear, taken. Sir Gilbert Daundelyonne,” he continued, “ thou hast fought beside our brother in Palestine ; make into the town yonder, and learn, if thou canst, how it fares with the Queen.”

“ The Bastard !” shouted a dozen voices at

that moment. "See, he comes towards us from the town."

"Art sure 'tis he?" said the King, as he turned his steed and bore back from the increasing confusion now taking place amongst his own followers.

"Methinks, I should know that steed amongst a million," said Salisbury; "and, except your royal brother, there was never seen in my time any one to match the rider."

"That page of thine is thinly clad for such a scene as this, Lord Folkstone," remarked John, as his eye caught a glimpse of our old acquaintance, the page of Daundelyonne; "but his horse looks fresh and swift. Bid him ride and meet Sir Richard; and tell him to turn and aid the Queen, if not too late. Lord Salisbury, gallop back, and bid Hubert hasten on with the remainder of our power, lest we be taken in our own trap here. Retire, gentlemen," he continued, "we will remove a short distance from this ground. The day grows wondrous hot here."

"That youth will hardly make good his message," said Salisbury. "See, he is intercepted

by a large body of the enemy. But no," he continued, "the lad has evaded them and presses forwards. Ha, by heaven! they follow; their lances are down; they make for Faulconbridge's small party, and will bear him hard. De Ferrers, do thou remain here beside the King;—Lord Folkstone, to the rescue." So saying the Earl of Salisbury raised his arm, and shaking his ponderous lance, glanced around to his followers, and departed like a thunderbolt towards the spot where Faulconbridge had already closed with his enemies.

Lord Folkstone, likewise, putting spurs to his horse, galloped furiously in the direction he had seen taken by the page; whilst the adverse parties encountered with a shock that sounded above the din, every where around.

"The poor boy," he said, "has ridden with breast unarmed through the thick of the battle by my side, and now, I fear me, he has fallen in yonder dreadful scene of strife. I had rather lose my right hand than that page should suffer harm."

As the young Lord neared the combatants,

he beheld a lady mounted in the midst of the Bastard's party, which was now completely hemmed in, and almost overwhelmed by their numerous foes. The Bastard, himself, who was conspicuous amongst the *mêlée* from his great height, alone seemed to maintain a stand against the rushing tide which poured upon him. His lance had been shivered up to the grasp; his ponderous sword was also broken, and with a heavy mace, which he had caught up from his saddle-bow—he now apparently with as much ease, as if he had been merely exercising his arm for sport—dashed out the brains of horse and rider as he struck; whilst ever as he cleared a passage for himself, he bounded back to the side of the lady, whose bridle-rein it seemed his especial duty to guard. The fierce Elinor, for she it was who was by the side of Faulconbridge in the midst of this scene of strife, sitting erect and dauntless upon the horse on which she had been placed when her kinsman rescued her in the town, quailed not at the raining blows which fell around; but in her ermined robe, she scowled with the fierce

hate and disdain of some enchained fury upon the French knights who were aiming at her capture or death.

“Ha!” she exclaimed, as Faulconbridge, dashed in the casque of the Count de Samb-lancay, and sent him headlong from his saddle, “there struck Richard’s arm! Brave coz,” she added, as another knight fell before his hurling mace, “the spirit of Plantagenet was in that blow.”

The timely succour of the Earl of Pembroke and Lord Folkstone, had enabled the brave son of Cœur de Lion to strike himself somewhat clear of the multitude hanging upon his diminished party. The last blow he struck ridded him of the powerful Count de Chartres, and his ponderous mace was broken, as it buried itself through crest and helm in the brain of that puissant knight. He then grasped a second opponent by the throat with one hand, whilst he bore the Queen’s horse clear with the other, and, galloping with her to the rear, again turned, and descrying the royal banner in the distance, made towards it.

The powerful steed which Faulconbridge rode, and which barded from counter to tail under the torment of spur and curb in the strong grasp of its powerful rider, had plunged, bounded, and reared aloft, whilst he dealt his blows, now reeled and struggled as the knight spurred him once more towards the scene of blood. It seemed as though the gallant brute but held his strength, till he could bear his rider to the King, for, as he reached the spot on which John stood (surrounded by several of his knights) he fell clattering headlong on the green turf. His mighty heart was broke, and he fell, absolutely spurred and goaded to death.

The knight was somewhat shaken by the fall, but he disengaged himself from the dying steed, and leaping to his feet stood weaponless before the King. His crest was shorn from his helm, his armour hacked and broken, and every part of the harness upon his athletic limbs and body showing tokens of the strife he had passed through since the battle had commenced.

“What tidings, Sir Richard?” inquired the monarch. “Our mother, has she fallen into the hands of yonder party?”

“ Her highness is in safety, my Liege,” returned Faulconbridge. “ I rescued her but now, and placed her under strong guard. The banner of Hubert is in sight, coming over yonder hill. Prince Arthur too is taken. One more charge, and we drive these Frenchmen to the winds, ere the main body is in the field.”

“ Ha !” said John, his dark countenance flushing a deep red, and his eye scowling as he closed his visor. “ Is Arthur taken ! Draw our puissance together, cousin,” he continued as Faulconbridge leaped upon the steed offered him by an esquire, “ and advance upon them, whilst we attend to the security and safety of our prize.”

“ St. George for England !” shouted the Bastard, as he vanished with the speed of thought towards the conflict.

The shadows of evening were descending upon the field of battle without the walls of Mirabeau, as the faint and wailing blast of distant trumpets sounded upon the breeze and swept over its fern-clad undulations.

The din of the conflict had given place to the stillness of eventide. It was as if some horrible tempest, which tears up the mountain pine by the roots, and topples down "huge towers and moss-grown steeples," had suddenly worn out its fury, and, satisfied with the ravages it had created, had sunk down to rest exhausted.

The dreary whisper of the evening wind was only disturbed by the faint and failing blast of the horns of the English leaders, who, remaining masters of the field, sounded out a few wild notes, to recal the stragglers to their sides.

The battle had been fought, the day was "lost and won." Of the gallant little army of Prince Arthur, whose friends on that morning had drawn their swords high in hope and pride, not one remained upon the field but the dead, the dying, and the vanquished.

The Prince himself was a captive, together with several of his leaders, and the remainder of his force scattered, destroyed, and discomfited; whilst John, elated with success, with the Queen-

mother and many of the nobles of his army, kept wassail that evening in the castle of Mirabeau, the kettle-drum and trumpet braying out

“The triumph of his pledge.”

It was on a small open space where the long grass bent to the wind, and which was quite uncovered by the prickly gorse and fern, elsewhere growing around, that several steeds and horsemen had been overthrown, and were lying ghastly objects upon the field. The number and near proximity of the slain, and the devices upon their battered shields and torn surcoats, shewed that the struggle upon this spot had been fierce, and that some of the most valued blood of France had there been shed like water.

Amidst this “carrion death” there was indeed but one who had apparently escaped unscathed, and this was a youthful page, who, kneeling beside the prostrate form of a wounded knight, sought to unclasp the lacings of the helmet he wore, in order to staunch the blood which

flowed so plentifully as completely to have saturated the garments worn beneath his chain-mail.

It was indeed evident to the page, that unless he could quickly succeed in rendering essential assistance to the young Lord of Folkstone, who had been pierced by a lance in the throat, and to all appearance was mortally hurt, the young knight must bleed to death in a short time.

The small and taper fingers of the page seemed quite unequal to the task of unclasping the fastenings of the helmet, and he appeared almost wild with despair, as he started up and looked around in the hope of assistance. Suddenly, however, he bethought him of his dagger, and quickly unsheathing it, he forced back the iron hooks by which the helm was clasped.

The young knight opened his eyes as the stifling casque was removed, and the cool blast visited his cheek. He seemed to recognise the youth who sought to aid him; but as the gushing tide flowed from his wound, his remains of life appeared ebbing fast away, and he

rolled heavily from the supporting arms of the boy upon the ground.

'Twas a ghastly sight for one so young. A dying friend amidst a heap of slain. But the page appeared to be one who had profited by the uses of adversity. He glanced around, and then taking off the hood he wore, he cut off a portion of the luxuriant hair which fell upon his shoulders, and with the scarf bound it upon the gaping wound. He then drew a small flask from the gypsum at his side, and applying it to the lips of the fainting knight, drew his body up against the carcase of a slain horse, and placing him in a sitting posture, quietly waited beside him, in hopes that succour would arrive ere darkness descended.

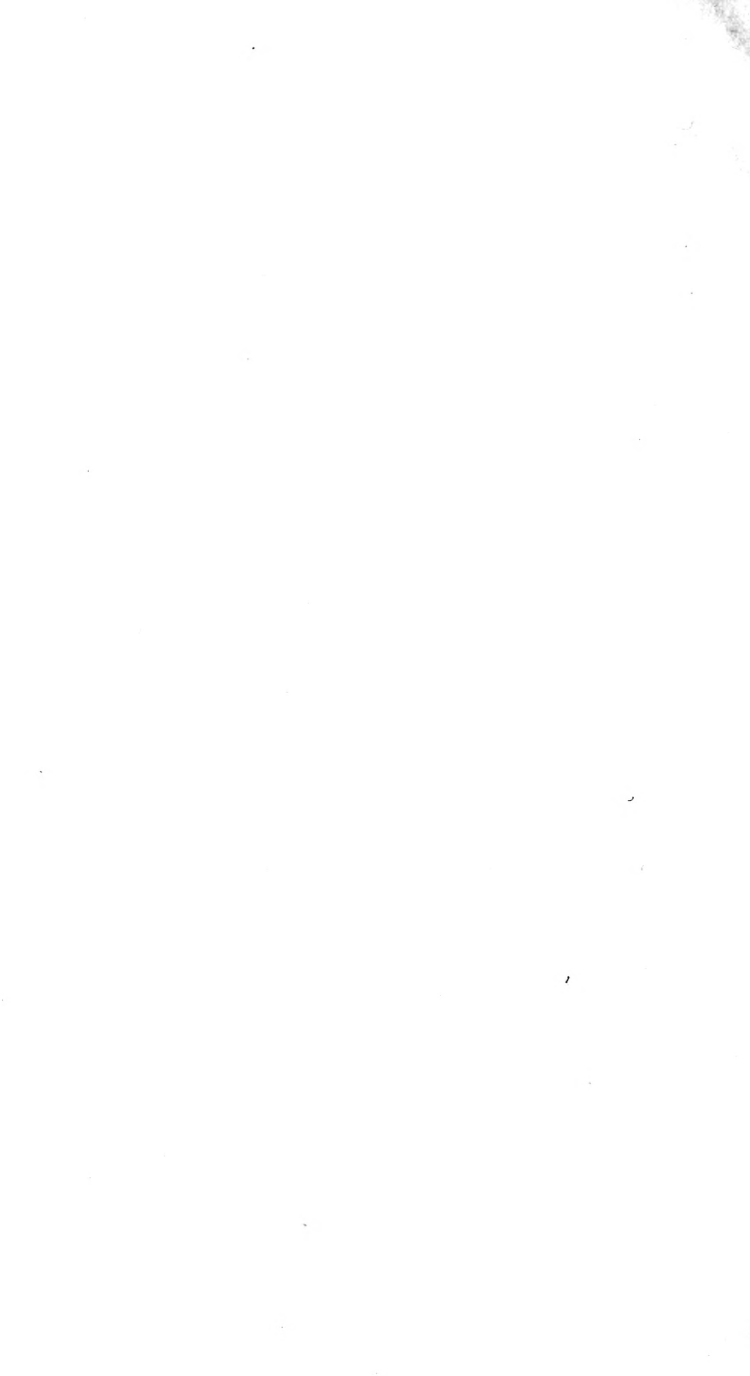
Meanwhile, somewhat removed from the spot where the brunt of the battle had taken place, might be seen a small body of the combatants still upon the ground on which they had fought. They were a portion of the English power; but they looked more like men who had been beaten, than of the party of the conqueror. Discontent and sorrow were in their

looks. The very notes of their trumpets, as they floated upon the blast, sounded a wailing lament. They spoke to each other in under tones, as if they regretted now the fight was won, that their hands and weapons had helped to strike in the cause. That day boded ill-fortune to England. Arthur of Bretagne was taken and a prisoner in the hands of John. Meanwhile the sun had set fiery red upon the stricken field, gilding with its rays the ghastly picture it presented, and as darkness closed around the horsemen rode slowly into Mirabeau.

END OF VOL. I.

LONDON:

Printed by Schulze and Co., 13, Polan Street.







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